HM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

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A Plea For Purging
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House of Heroes
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FOR TODAY

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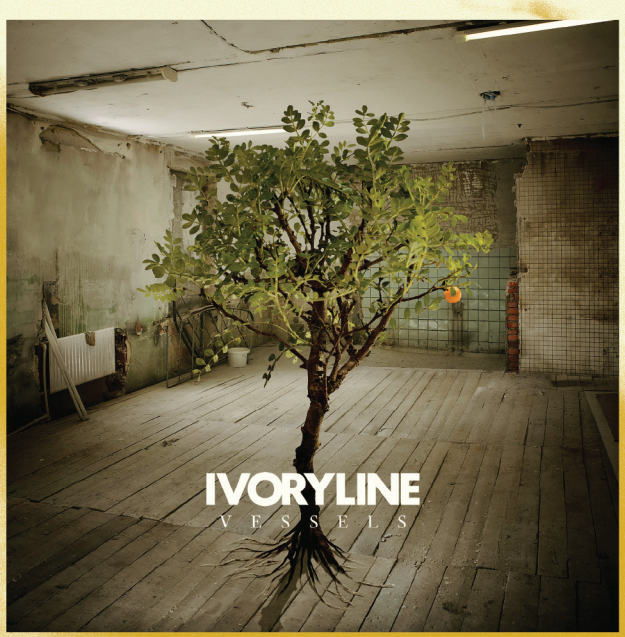

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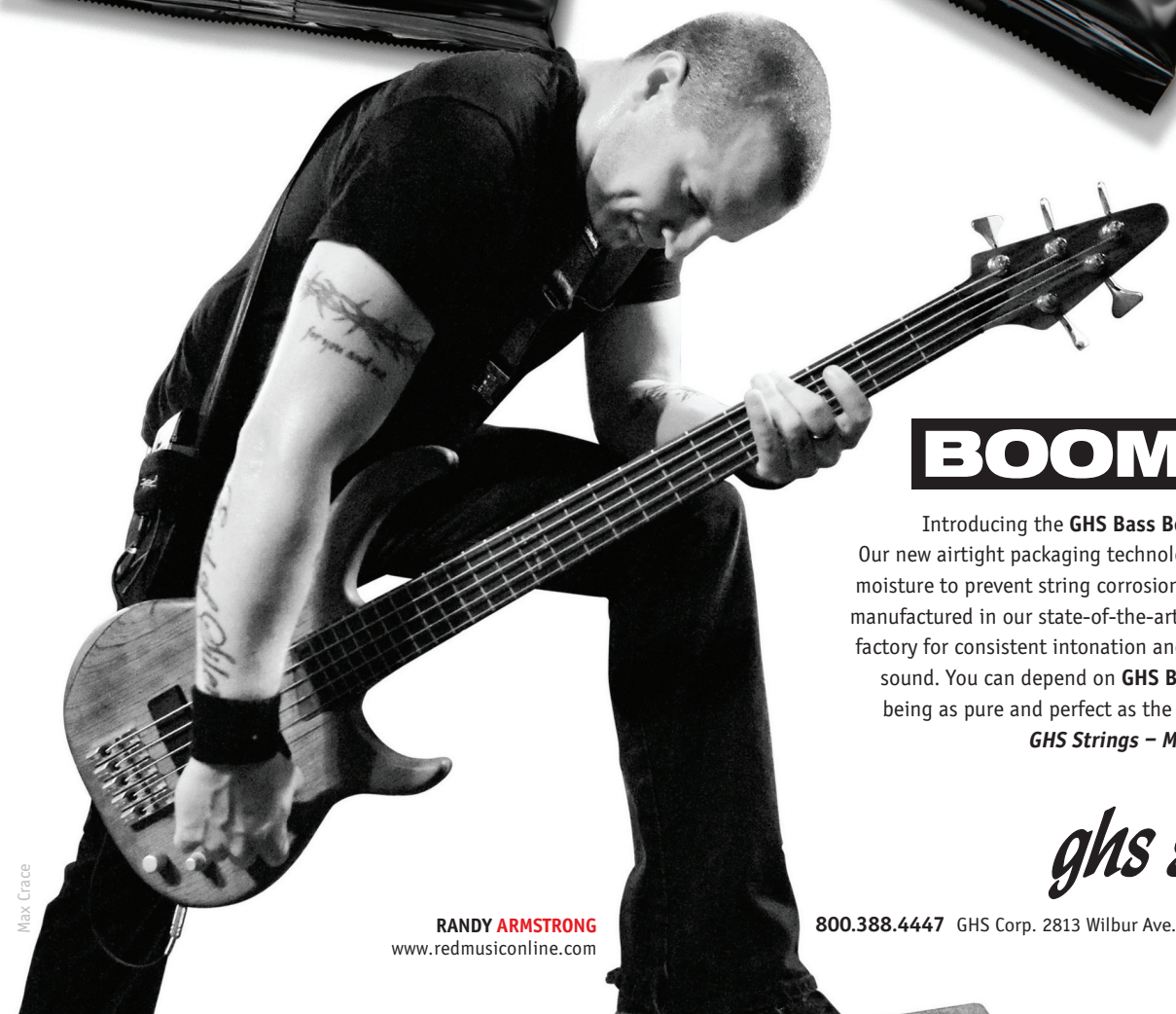

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

WITH NEW BLOOD FLOWS NEW IDEAS

I loved the synergy that we get here at the HM Magazine offices sometimes. This summer we've had the help of five new interns (Nathan, Bianca, Jeff, Megan and Brittany). The ideas have been flowing on how to save, improve and grow HM Magazine. One thing you subscribers should have noticed by now is the new video content on our website. Like our magazine, we don't give it away for free to the public. But our subscribers are outfitted with passwords, so they can check it out. We've been hitting up lots of shows and have gone the extra mile by securing short video interviews with many of the bands. This sort of "exclusive content" is something we want to keep giving to our subscribers.

If you've picked this issue up on a newsstand/bookstore, God bless you! Your support on the retail level is also invaluable, but if you'd like access to this online content, it can be yours for the small price of $6 per year. It's what we charge for our online/digital subscriptions. If you'd like to see what our digital issues look like online (in addition to the website video exclusives I described), you can check out two years' worth of back issues at **hm.realviewusa.com** we recently unlocked to make for free public viewing.

Another great tool we've developed this summer is a re-launching of the HM Magazine Street Team. With your help we'll introduce HM Magazine to those young rockers that don't know about us. Back in the day it seemed like we had a lot more momentum going for us, but now that Christian hard music has grown so much, along with the internet and media outlets, there are fewer and fewer "central" locations where everyone goes. This music continues to grow, but it's just harder to communicate to all its fans these days. For more information on being involved, go to **hmmag.com/street-team** or email streetteam@hmmag.com

For those that like to know about our "Save HM Campaign," we're still in a hole of heaping debt ($25,599 worth) and ad sales are not improving (they continue to decline). We need a miracle, we need a breakthrough, we need a new plan. The ideas outlined above are a part of that solution (we hope) and we're working hard to succeed. We're going to continue our Save HM Magazine Campaign with kickstarter.com Visit my blog at hmmag.com for up-to-the-minute details on all things HM.

SPINNING AT HM NOW

WONROWE VISION	*Mission Invincible*	A cross twix Children 18:3 and Motorhead.
EVOLETT	*For Your Consideration*	Reminds me of Paramore circa *Twilight*...
VARIOUS ARTISTS	*Fathers of Thunder*	Prophetic words & songs of encouragement.
OUTSIDE THE CAMP	*Divine in the Wake...*	Dallas, TX never sounded so good.
TDWP	*Zombie EP*	Not only for Zombies, but for interns too.
EMERY	*The Weak's End*	This album ages like a fine wine.
MAT KEARNEY	*Bullet*	Reminds Nathan of nights in the Midwest.

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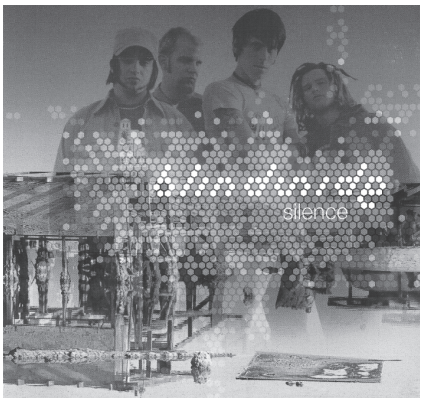

BLINDSIDED

I just received my anniversary issue and i flipped straight to the "Top 100 List" and I was just blindsided. NO BLINDSIDE! It was annoying that great albums like *Bless the Martyr, Kiss the Child* by Norma Jean and *Frail Words Collapse* by As I Lay Dying were omitted, but no Blindside, that is just Pitiful! If not in the top 100 then where does *Silence* belong? I still love you Doug and your magazine, even if you are wrong.
–Cary Richards, via email

Ed– #101? I had assumed that Blindside would be a slam-dunk inclusion on this list, but somehow they got pushed off by others. Same with AILD, Barren Cross, ABR, NJ. Valid points all.

RIDICULOUS!

Not having Rez band in your top 100 best Christian albums in your new issue is RIDICULOUS!
–Marty Phillips, via internet

Ed– Perhaps our "Classic Moments in Christian Rock" feature this issue (pg. 56) can atone for the Rez omission... Maybe?

OWL CITY SUCKS

Overall the "Top 100 List" was a good read and pretty accurate. My only issues with it were that the Owl City and Seabird albums have not been out long enough to consider them classics and there were too many 80's albums in there. Obviously, there should have been some of them because history is important. Also, the Family Force 5 *Dance or Die* cd makes my list of the top 100 disappointing albums of all time. The first one was so good and that one just is hard to listen to. Anyway you did a great job though. See ya at Purple Door?
–James Cooper, via internet

Ed – I was planning on going to PD ... until I saw this letter. I cancelled, because I fear for my life! Just kidding. The recent albums that made it were calculated projections of "classicness." Trust me, I'm an editor.

THE DARK SIDE OF THE INDUSTRY

So I've read the articles, they're good stories, but sad. It's so disappointing to discover how business is killing art. Maybe it always has been. I guess I knew that, but reading it in print . . . man, that's tough. Some of those statistics – 75 cents a CD [I could make more than that at a pawn shop selling a cd – and it's not even my work]. It just doesn't sit well with me. Not well at all. I guess part of me thinks that the "Christian" industry should be exempt from all of this. That art beats business, because truth and expression is more important than money. But I guess none of us are immune to the dirty dollar. I think I see why some of those "unsigned" bands who I loved, after they "make it" and get signed, start releasing garbage – or at the very least, songs WAY below their potential . . . what I mean is, they release what will sell and lose a part of the beauty that was the art they created. Reading this makes me think: maybe, I shouldn't be so judgemental.

The thing that hits me the most is the fact that I've always considered myself a supporter of music and a supporter of those bands that hit a nerve and touch the spirit – and I almost don't know what to do to help anymore. To help the bands, more over the band members as people, and not the industry.

I book a small mini-festival, if you will, each year and I think about all the bands that have graced our humble stages. I think of Corpus Christi, literally a week ago, being so ENTIRELY thankful we sent them home with some cases of water . . . really? For water? I guess now I get why that was a big deal to them.

So what do we do? Because it feels like we should do something, like I should do something. And I don't know what that answer is. But, I guess if merch is their main profit intake, I suppose I'll have to consent to wearing band shirts the rest of my life [which is a fate I willingly accept], and seek any way I can to support the artists. Thanks so much for these articles and all the rest of the magazine – the music and stories you cover I find nowhere else. And I thank you for that. You've found yourself another supporter of the save HM campaign.
–Christian Renken, via Facebook

Ed – Thanks for the thoughts, Christian. I guess I should clue everyone else in that you just read the 7-page cover story for HM Issue #104 – "The Ugly Truth Behind Christian Rock" (available as a back issue at our online store) as well as the online companion articles to that story in our treasure trove of archives at: hmmag.com/exclusive/earchive.php. *What's sad is you take all those hard facts and apply them to our poor economy ... but at least now we have organizations that are helping, like RYFO (ryfo.org).*

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SCRIPTURE "The Lord came and stood there. He called as He had called the other times: 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel replied, 'Speak. I'm listening.' Then the Lord said to Samuel, 'I am going to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears it ring.'" (1Samuel 3:10-11)

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HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

MXPX DRUMMER RETIRES
YURI RULEY CALLS IT A DAY

Two days after their 18-year anniversary, Bremerton, WA trio MxPx announces the retirement of their drummer Yuri Ruley, as the band plans to scale back on touring, but will continue to play select shows and release new material. After 18 years and nearly 2.5 million records, having helped pave the way for pop-punk music, Ruley will be departing the band in order to focus more on his family life. "With MxPx being a touring band and constantly on the road nine months out of the year, I knew at some point it would have to come to an end, but the reality of it is a lot harder than I thought it would be. MxPx has been my second family for nearly two decades, but I need to step away to focus on raising my family." MxPx will continue to perform in festivals and one-off dates with Chris Wilson (The Summer Obsession) sitting in on drums. [Photo: Jered Scott]

BLISSED
CANADIAN BAND PLAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Playing at clubs and festivals has always been what Blissed has done, but as of late going into public schools and high schools with the show and encouraging a student body while entertaining is as much a part of the band's touring schedule as the former. This assembly is called "Build Your Passion" and is a Blissed concert combined with multimedia, interactive games and a high-impact message. "We want to be world-class entertainers, we deliver a spectacle of a rock show," states David Pearson, the band's lead singer. "No matter where we go we have noticed that people have the same issues and apathy is at the heart of all of them. That is why we have made it our goal that whenever we perform we make sure that everyone at the show leaves feeling better about themselves and about what it is they can do with their lives."

HM posts special "behind the scenes" content

If you don't think there's enough hard music news in this issue, then it's time to pull out your smart phone. Although the photo above may look like a standard bar-code, in reality it's so much more. A QR Code (Quick Response Code) is a two-dimensional code that bridges the gap between the physical and virtual worlds. After downloading a QR Code reading software on your smart phone, you're able to photograph the small square pattern above, which is then decoded into a link. Within seconds you're at HMmagazine.com – where you'll find even more news, album reviews, artist interviews, and lots more. So, in the future when you're flipping through the pages of HM, keep an eye out for more QR Codes, because you never know where you'll end up.

News bullets

Day Of Fire has just announced that they are going on a leave of absence. From their MySpace page: "We have decided to take an indefinite hiatus. Sincere thanks to all our friends, fans and associates who've supported us along the way. We've greatly enjoyed the years spent making music together. We'll be playing three more shows this year: Ichthus, Lifelight and Night of Joy. We'd love to see you all out there for a proper goodbye rocking."

Mae will be welcoming back keyboardist Rob Sweitzer and bassist Mark Padgett for their final *Goodbye, Goodnight Tour* this fall. This tour will kick off in early October and run through the end of November.

Children 18:3's sophomore release, *Rain's 'A Comin'*, landed at No. 23 on Billboard Heatseekers chart.

After several DIY tours and a release on Sancrosanct Records, **The Burial** are poised for solid growth with their Strike First debut, *The Winepress*.

According to his Twitter, **Relient K**'s **Matthew Thiessen** is starting work on his solo album.

We Came As Romans have announced their upcoming U.S. headlining tour. Joining the Detroit-based band on the *Band of Brothers Tour* will be: **In Fear and Faith**, **Confide**, Upon A Burning Body and Abandon All Ships starting August 27th.

August Burns Red is touching back down to earth with the release of *Home*, ABR's first live CD and DVD. The DVD/CD shoot – filmed in, appropriately enough, the band's hometown of Manheim, PA – drew a sold-out crowd of 1,250 people who wanted to participate in the exciting performance, including some who traveled internationally, from as close as Montreal to as far as away as Amsterdam.

Underoath has recently finished recording their new album. Expect the release this October.

As I Lay Dying is going on a North American tour with All That Remains, Unearth and Carnifex; followed by a European tour with Heaven Shall Burn and Suicide Silence.

GET LATE-BREAKING NEWS ONCE A WEEK! SIGN UP FOR THE HM E-MAIL LIST AT HMMAG.COM

In The Midst Of Lions

BY LEVI MACALLISTER

At a venue in Zanesville, Ohio, Samuel Penner, guitarist, asks for prayer against pride. Wal-Mart candy aisle, 12:30 a.m. Easter morning, Jacob Mitchell, bassist, asks for prayer against pride. Corpus Christi, TX, Whataburger parking lot, Matt Janssen, vocalist, apologizes and asks for prayer against gossip and slander towards another band – other brothers. The van, late morning in the Midwest, Alexander Livingston, drummer, apologizes for ungratefulness. The van, late at night and out West, Ryan McAllister, lead guitar, apologizes for gossip, cruelty and pride.

"The hearts of men are easily corrupted…"

The Heart Of Man is a journey. Corruption, consequence and transformation. What started out as a concept album about the wrath of God morphed and became the beauty that grace is in light of what we deserve.

The point is not finding flaw in a band, the point is that we are all flawed. The point is not to bring out unknown secrets from perfect people, the point is that In The Midst of Lions took the narrow path towards honesty and, inadvertently, created an attitude of repentance that people can reckon with. In practicing transparency, its members have put off an aura of approachability that grows thicker as time progresses.

I finally got ahold of the vocalist after I called his phone three times, gave up, called one of the guitarists to ask him where Matt was, to which I got the reply: "He's sitting next to me, just looking at his phone and ignoring it (giggle/fun-loving 'I don't wanna talk to you!')." Matt has always been great at spilling his heart out. Last year, at Cornerstone Festival, he began his testimony during a set, boldly, and finished in tears when he'd realized his younger brother was in the audience, hearing of his true past for the first time. Now, a year later, collaborating lyrically with that same sibling, Colter Janssen, he has developed his voice and shaped his lyrics into a more vulnerable, artistic expression of an apologetic heart – a voice vastly matured since ITMOL's Strikefirst release. "*Out Of Darkness* was a lot of me pulling stories from the Bible and quoting a lot of Scripture in those lyrics. While that's all good and well, I wanted to pray over these lyrics and make them my own. The corruption part goes hand-in-hand with where my life was for a long time, and then I realized along the way – mainly when I was saved – that if I didn't change my actions, something bad was going to happen to me. The last part is about the transformation that I had to go through – that I'm still going through every day. This whole album applies to everyone in this band – it's our past and where we came from until now."

Meshing together life experience, Scripture, J.R.R. Tolkein quotes and *Lord Of The Rings*-inspired riffs (like any good, God-fearing, completely nerded-out dudebros should), In The Midst Of Lions have remained faithful to their calling, and been blessed along the way. "I feel like, as a band, our hearts are more for God than ever. The last line of our album says, 'Take my heart, make it Yours.' We've learned that we want to love on people – to show Jesus through our lives."

May it be so. Through music both tormented and beautiful in unison, through words that are so much more than just words, through lives that are constantly transforming, through a transparency that allows for nothing less than Christ to shine mercy through the messes we've made … these are the hearts of men.

Write Your words on them.

Tooth & Nail Records would like to welcome Minneapolis, Minnesota's **Swimming With Dolphins** to their artist roster. Formerly of **Owl City**, frontman **Austin Tofte** has created ambient electronica pop inspired by the ocean and fond childhood memories of America's largest lakes. The band will head into the studio this summer to record their Tooth & Nail debut. Independently releasing *Ambient Blue EP*, Swimming With Dolphins have already attracted a huge fanbase, which has only grown thanks to tours with the likes of Owl City, Lydia, We Are The In Crowd and Places and Numbers.

Mychildren Mybride's *Lost Boy* debuted at #156 on the Billboard Top 200 Chart and at #1 on CMJ's Most Added chart in the Loud Rock category. They recently released an iPhone and iTouch app as well, available now on iTunes. The app helps you retrieve the latest MCMB news and updates, watch videos, view photos, listen to music and communicate with other fans.

Strongarm is extremely pleased to announce that Blood & Ink Records will be releasing the seminal Spirit-filled hardcore album *Atonement* on vinyl, nearly a year in the making and 15 years after the original release on CD and cassette by Tooth & Nail Records.

Equal Vision Records is pleased to welcome **Texas In July** to its roster. Defying any definitions of age, the band has already toured the country and back, sharing stages with everyone from **The Devil Wears Prada** and Every Time I Die to August Burns Red and **Maylene and the Sons of Disaster** – all before the entire band had graduated from high school. Their two youngest members walked across the graduation stage this year.

Recover, **Confide**'s sophomore album, ascended to the #6 spot on the Billboard Heatseekers chart.

Anberlin kicks off a big North American tour to support *Dark is the Way, Light is a Place* on September 18th.

EDITORIAL

Mike Reynolds plays guitar and ministers with the band For Today, this is a little of his heart to the heavy music culture.

Life with the Holy Spirit is an everyday effort to put ourselves into a place of surrender, to listen to His voice and to experience His presence. May this encourage you and edify you as children of God. Here we go:

"And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high and how deep His love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God." –Ephesians 3:18-19

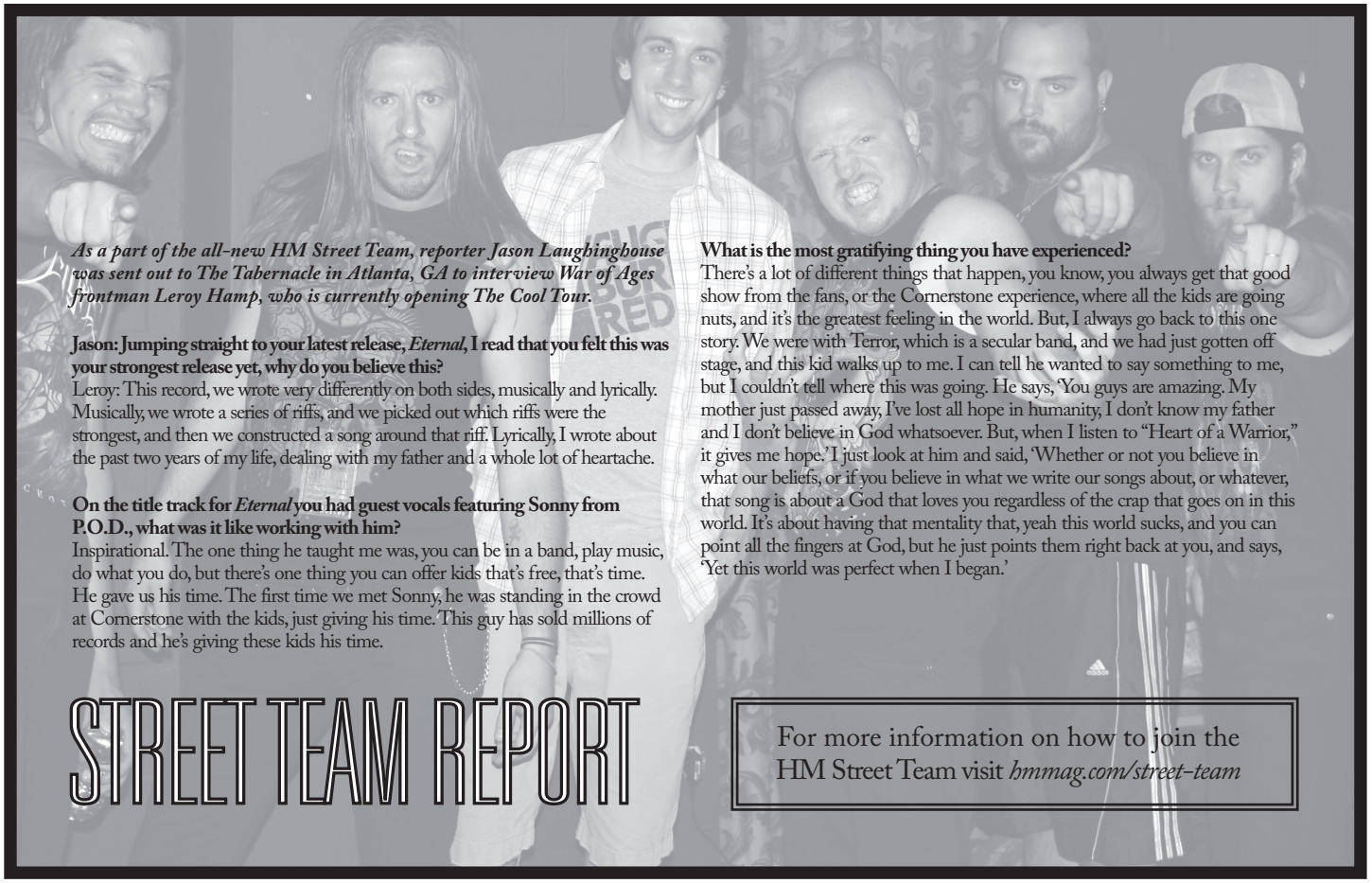
There is only one grand revelation that fuels every other; it is the love of the Father. If we can see and experience the Love of God it says that we will be "complete" and that we will have "all the fullness of life and power that comes from God." I believe we are to meditate and focus on how much He loves us and values us until we find ourselves in that place where "loving God" is a natural byproduct of knowing His affection towards us.

"We love Him, because He first loved us." –1 John 4:19

I am contending that without knowing His love and affection or knowing the way He values us then we cannot love Him in return. We can do "righteous" things, but without receiving the love of the Father it is all in vain. When we come into contact with His love everything is put into perspective, ministry is empowered, life is brought into order and He, above all else, is honored by our acceptance of His very nature.

The Holy Spirit is eager to encounter you and to show you the love of the Father; He will meet a willing person and bring them into an experience with the greatest force known to man. Meditate on your value to Him, meditate on the truth that He called it a joy to die for you knowing He would have you as a friend. Meditate on the truth that He says you are worth the price He paid for your freedom. Meditate on the truth that He has loved you from the beginning and that your performance has not and will not diminish His opinion of you.

Grace to you as you move into His love and become empowered by the revelation of His affection.



STREET TEAM REPORT

As a part of the all-new HM Street Team, reporter Jason Laughinghouse was sent out to The Tabernacle in Atlanta, GA to interview War of Ages frontman Leroy Hamp, who is currently opening The Cool Tour.

Jason: Jumping straight to your latest release, *Eternal*, I read that you felt this was your strongest release yet, why do you believe this?
Leroy: This record, we wrote very differently on both sides, musically and lyrically. Musically, we wrote a series of riffs, and we picked out which riffs were the strongest, and then we constructed a song around that riff. Lyrically, I wrote about the past two years of my life, dealing with my father and a whole lot of heartache.

On the title track for *Eternal* you had guest vocals featuring Sonny from P.O.D., what was it like working with him?
Inspirational. The one thing he taught me was, you can be in a band, play music, do what you do, but there's one thing you can offer kids that's free, that's time. He gave us his time. The first time we met Sonny, he was standing in the crowd at Cornerstone with the kids, just giving his time. This guy has sold millions of records and he's giving these kids his time.

What is the most gratifying thing you have experienced?
There's a lot of different things that happen, you know, you always get that good show from the fans, or the Cornerstone experience, where all the kids are going nuts, and it's the greatest feeling in the world. But, I always go back to this one story. We were with Terror, which is a secular band, and we had just gotten off stage, and this kid walks up to me. I can tell he wanted to say something to me, but I couldn't tell where this was going. He says, 'You guys are amazing. My mother just passed away, I've lost all hope in humanity, I don't know my father and I don't believe in God whatsoever. But, when I listen to "Heart of a Warrior," it gives me hope.' I just look at him and said, 'Whether or not you believe in what our beliefs, or if you believe in what we write our songs about, or whatever, that song is about a God that loves you regardless of the crap that goes on in this world. It's about having that mentality that, yeah this world sucks, and you can point all the fingers at God, but he just points them right back at you, and says, 'Yet this world was perfect when I began.'

For more information on how to join the HM Street Team visit *hmmag.com/street-team*

LIVE REPORT

Cornerstone Festival 20TEN

June 28 - July 3

REVIEW & PHOTOS: DOUG VAN PELT

(Bushnell, IL) With a grand total high of probably 85 degrees on Saturday and an average in the low 80s all week, this year's weather was the best ever for this festival. Distilling the massive, diverse Cornerstone experience with its multiple stages, seminars and generator stages would take all the 64 pages of this magazine, so we'll just touch on a few highlights that blew us away.

The Chariot certainly knows how to make a festival appearance a special event. Those that've seen them breathe fire, for instance, can attest to this. As we curiously watched their set, wondering what they'd do this time, we got our answer towards the end. They had a makeshift mini-stage set up in the back of the HM Magazine/Encore One tent by the sound board. The band played a mini-set of a few songs back there. It was just ridiculous. The folks in the back, who usually have to strain on their toes to get a glimpse of the visual band, now had the band in their face, leaning over them and surfing atop some outstretched hands. It was simply amazing and memorable.

Several bands "killed it" in terms of sonic aggressiveness and emotional power. **Mychildren Mybride** did that for a crowd that packed the HM Magazine tent like metal-loving sardines. **The Showdown** showed off their new band members and songs much to our delight. **Gwen Stacy** had a fun idea to start off their set by tossing water balloons into the crowd. A problem ensued when one tough-skinned ballooned hit an audience member's hands which reacted by "passing" the balloon backwards to sail further into the ... sound board. Yikes! Perhaps the frustration for the band that followed on a wet stage an hour later made them play with more grit and intensity, because **Living Sacrifice** was spot on and alive with passionate and gripping metal. **Flatfoot 56** took their "make this memorable" approach up another notch, which had us worried, since they were playing the HM/Encore One tent stage and last year their crowd took out the tent poles with a reenactment of the battle of the Alamo. Their theme this year was "Shark Week" and they started their show with a hilarious disclaimer (which you *must* hear on youtube by searching "Flatfoot 56 Cornerstone 10").

Texas In July and **War of Ages** put in two excellent performances back-to-back, showcasing both up-and-coming and veteran metal skillsmanship. Having dual guitar players in each band leaves room for some flashy lead breaks. Thursday night at the HM Magazine Stage was pretty fun, as face-painted death metallers **A Hill To Die Upon** played, followed by **BTA**, **Sacred Warrior** and **Overcome**.

Iona was a real treat with their unique blend of Celtic roots and progressive rock. Like most of the bands playing at the Gallery Stage/Tent, it felt like family when the bands (like **The Choir** and the **Lost Dogs**) casually shared between songs.

For a broader review of the Cornerstone Festival experience than reported above, check out our continued coverage on the next page.

Clockwise from top: Demon Hunter on mainstage; Sacred Warrior's Bruce Swift & Rey Parra; Demon Hunter's Ryan Clark; MCMB's Matthew Hasting; A Hill To Die Upon's Michael Cook.

We wanted to bring a little more coverage than usual this year, as we keep running into one beautiful/cool person after another that is doing something profound and exciting for the kingdom of God on earth ... and that's really as much a part (if not more) of the Cornerstone Festival experience as the music is, so check out these people and their stories. For each one that inspires you or challenges you, go to the corresponding website for more info. And don't forget to tell them that HM Magazine sent ya.

Photo: Scott Stahnke

Project 12 | *project12.us*

Project 12 is a 10-month discipleship training program put on by Jesus People USA (JPUSA), who also put on the Cornerstone Festival. Includes in-depth biblical studies, prayer, meditation, inner-city work with homeless families and children, concert outreaches and a two-week missions trip.

Thunder School | *harvestsound.com*

An exciting ministry school based largely in part upon the "Sons of Thunder" vision and prophecies that came in the early '90s. A September 12th through December 12th training that "forges musicians and evangelists for the harvest." Two students at the booth were going on a reconciliation march to Indian reservations after Cornerstone, repenting on behalf of the white man's treatment of their tribes. Heavy, eh?

North Park University | *northpark.edu*

This Christian university near Chicago, IL is real big on social justice activities by the students with plenty of practical application on and around campus. Degree programs range from liberal arts to professional studies and theology.

Live Offensively | *liveoffensively.com*

This clothing company has lots of case histories or stories of how people wearing their shirts caused a stir. Some students have received flack for wearing their "Virginity Rocks" shirts to school.

Sixty-1 / Global Reach | *sixty1.org*

Raising awareness to stop the sex trade in places like India, Cambodia and Africa... They have a safe house for girls in India called the Asha House. Part of Global Reach's mission to "mobilize social justice" where it's needed.

Steal Kill and Destroy | *stealkillanddestroy.com*

A non-profit reaching kids. Looking for leaders in other cities and donations. This group goes on secular tours and reaches out to those they come into contact with in the "real" world.

Christ Cycles | *edxedge.com*

A non-profit that wants to get as many people on bikes as possible by building custom and affordable bikes. Behind the scenes they work with the "at-risk" community.

Show Your Faith Buttons | *showyourfaith@yahoo.com*

Outfits bands with buttons. Looking for bands to buy buttons. Good for concerts, youth events, radio stations, advertising.

The Chronological Project | *simplifiedgospel@gmail.com*

Putting into the hands of as many tribal people as our God would allow an elementary, but profound presentation of the Gospel in written form in their own tribal languages. Teaching and prepping kids for missions.

Foolish Industries | *foolishindustries.com*

This company has a "Buy a Shirt, Give a Shirt" offer, where they donate a free shirt to someone in a third-world country with every purchase here. They sponsor the band Triple Stitch, who played several sets at Cornerstone Festival.

Random People Who Care | *randompeoplewhocare.com*

An incredible network of peer mentoring and practical resources to help anyone in their time of need. Suicide prevention, breaking harmful addictions (cutting, drugs, porn), whatever. Tap into this network to help or get help.

Love Can't Be Baht | *lovecantbebaht.com*

This organization was started by a 17-year-old to help stop the sex trade. They work with Rapha House.

Mission Year | *missionyear.org*

A ministry that partners with you, giving you an opportunity to live out your faith and bring redemption in the context of daily ministering to those around us in our inner cities.

The Anchor School of Ministry | *theanchorschoolofministry.com*

Interested in church planting and/or relief? The Anchor School of Ministry can help you learn practical skills to successfully engage in ministry. Based in the heart of Nashville, this ministry is part of a church community that favors relationships and isn't hung up on tattoos, hair, musical styles, etc.

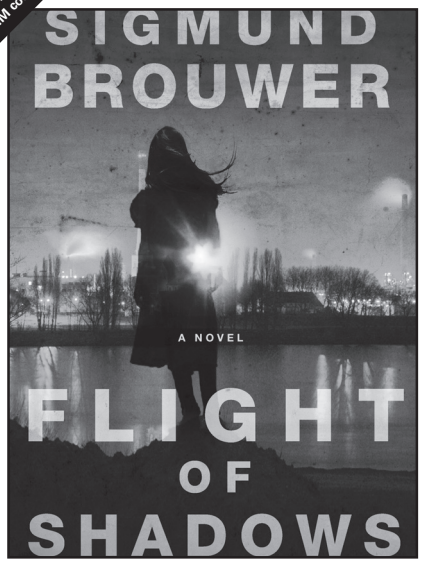
Calvin College | *admissions@calvin.edu*

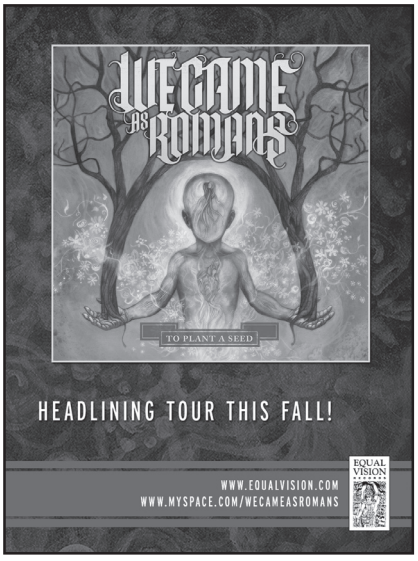
A Christian liberal arts college in Grand Rapids, MI. They like to book bands at their school, many of which get to play in their 6,000-seat venue.

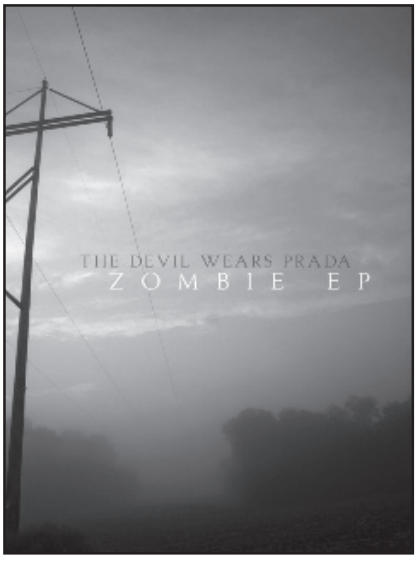
WallAxe | *wall-axe.com*

This company invented and patented a guitar hanger device that'll display and keep your axes (and guitar controllers) safe. Custom kits and skins available. Ideal for bands and studios.

WIN with HM contests







FLIGHT OF SHADOWS
Sigmund Brouwer

5 winners will receive a copy of this book

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WE CAME AS ROMANS
Signed CD + Concert Tickets

1 winner will receive a signed copy of *To Plant A Seed.* plus a pair of tickets to the *Band of Brothers Tour* with "meet & greet" passes. 2 other winners get tix + CD.

Enter by sending an email or postcard (BEFORE 10/30/10):
e: contest@hmmag.com

ZOMBIE PACKAGE
EP + Shirt + Comic + Signed Vinyl

1 winner will receive a *Zombie* EP, a t-shirt, a comic book, signed vinyl (*With Roots Above and Branches Below*).

Enter by sending an email or postcard (BEFORE 10/30/10):
e: contest@hmmag.com

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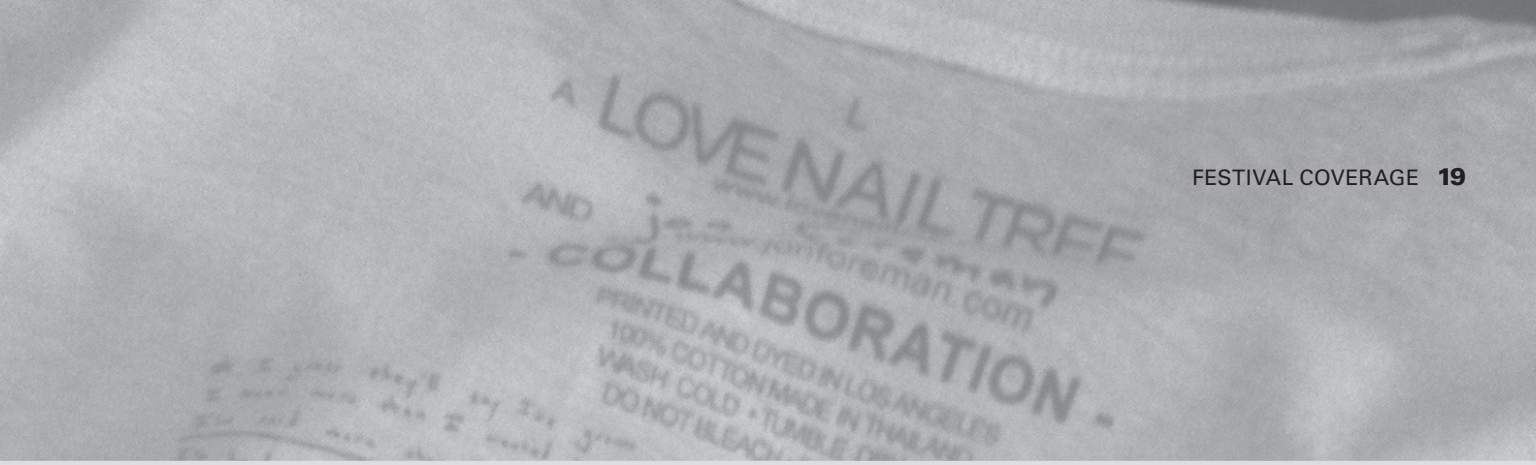

Invisible Children | *invisiblechildren.com*

This awesome ministry is now also helping farmers get back on their land in Africa. They have lots of handmade bags that they sell online and at festivals, each of which has a custom tag with the tailor's name on it. One of their volunteers, Nate Henn, was killed in the recent terrorist bombing in Uganda.

Love Nail Tree | *lovenailtree.com*

This clothing company probably had the coolest and most unique booth at the festival. Their clothing line designs are awesome, creative and each one tells a story (printed on the inside). "We believe there is a lot that needs to be talked about in our culture and we definitely aren't going to church up, water down or sugar coat it."

Band Rush | *bandrush.com*

A one-stop place to "help bands get to the next level." They offer websites, videos, gigs and social networking at a low cost. The quality of the videos they showed us was very high, fun and cool.

Lily White Designs | *lilywhitedesigns.net*

This small company was started by a young lady named Abby when she was 18. She learned to sew, the business grew, sold locally in Southern Illinois. They're hoping for a storefront soon. Named after Song of Solomon 2:2.

Get Green | *getgreentogetgreen.com*

This organization wisely found a way to turn material collection into fund-raising. When you recycle used cellphones (both working and broken), a portion can go to your business, charity, church. Phones get resold and used in third-world countries or melted down or stripped into components.

Restoring Eden | *restoringeden.org*

Formed to "love, serve and protect God's creation," Restoring Eden gives lots of information and practical advice on how to do just that. Issues of interest at the moment for them include coal ash and mountaintop coal removal. They're touring with In the Wake of Giants.

Christian Peacemaker Teams | *cpt.org*

This is an organization that has a comprehensive approach to promoting peace – from radical efforts like direct non-violent intervention to lighter fare, like passing out information at concerts and events to writing senators and reps to promote peace.

Bethel University | *bethel.edu*

A Christ-following university with 68 degrees and a full seminary located in St. Paul, MN and San Diego, CA. One of the cooler degrees they have is a reconciliation studies major.

The Love Alliance | *thelovealliance.net*

This organization realizes that social justice is a real popular fad at the moment and they offer information/education and promote action from serving in a local soup kitchen to more global efforts. You might've seen their "Remember the Poor" (and "Sick," "Hungry," "Enslaved") postcards.

Son Gear | *songear.com*

This brand-new company was started by Bob Van Zandt, who left the corporate world to advance God's kingdom. He dumped his life savings to become a lifestyle company. He testifies and stands behind his "life with Jesus is better" campaign from personal experience.

Stand True | *standtrue.com*

Each year this organization sponsors the Day of Silence protest to bring awareness to the slaughter of innocent children that is allowed to legally take place over 4,000 times (murders) a day in this country.

To Write Love On Her Arms | *twloha.com*

This infamous start-up is evolving as they grow. They're still heavily involved with music, because "music is something people run to in order to make sense of their lives."

Enthos | *enthos.net*

This company exists to "convey truth using art." David, the founder, relates how Jesus spoke in parables "the mysteries of heaven," and figures the tactics of Jesus should be ours as well. Their great designs are good at building common ground and starting conversations with people who may have opposing views on Christianity.

1 King Worship Wear | *1kingww.com*

Jeff Faralli of Milwaukee, WI started a new Christian apparel brand to "use the gifts God gave me" in the hopes of helping make "Christianity fashionable."

Rebecca Kurtz | *rebeccaellenkurtz.com*

This author has written a series of "dark" supernatural thrillers that touch on the Nephelim as well as paranormal and supernatural experiences that the author has been through.

Trevecca Nazarene University | *morethanacollege.com*

This liberal arts college in Nashville has a Center for Worship Arts and has studies in dance, oil painting and worship pastoring (to name a few). Nashville has more than 124 performance venues, 80 labels and 180 recording studios.

Scentsy | *scentsy.net*

Scentsy, created by a stay-at-home mom inspired by an episode of Oprah, is a thriving company that brings you wickless, kid-friendly and delicious-smelling candles.

Black Sheep Clothing | *iheartblacksheep.com*

The goal of this clothing company is to spread the word of God and let it be known that being the black sheep isn't always such a bad thing. They sell t-shirts in hopes of making people feel more accepted and comfortable in their own skin.

You Are Not Alone Ministries | *yanaministries.com*

YANA Ministries hopes to spread the love of God with others by offering fellowship and testimonies from people just like you.

Dead Bury Dead | *deadburydead.com*

This lifestyle-clothing brand encourages its consumers to "leave the past in the past and live the life they were created for."

New Creation Jewelry | *jewelryformissions.com*

This non-profit jewelry company was created to honor Diana Cobler, who lost her life to cancer. All proceeds are donated to fund missions trips and those in need.

Funky Glass Beads | *funkyglassbeads.com*

Every bead purchased from Funky Glass Beads is hand-made, unconventional and most importantly created to last. They even offer custom-made beads.

Same As Sunday | *myspace.com/sameassunday*

This melodic rock band from Indianapolis, IN, is currently on hiatus while their vocalist, Chris, serves our country overseas in the Armed Forces.

Grand Canyon University | *gcu.edu*

This esteemed university is located in Arizona and is a national leader in its online educational programs. They support both the undergraduate student as well as the working professional.

Wounded Records | *woundedrecords.net*

Since 1998, Wounded Records has strived to bring its listeners the best rock, punk and metal music with a positive message.

Freedom Drums | *freedomdrums.com*

When you purchase a djembe from Freedom Drums, not only are you guaranteed quality, but you're guaranteed an eco-friendly djembe made by an experienced craftsman.

Broken Circles Records | *brokencirclesrecords.com*

Started by one man in Cincinnati, this record company specializes in re-releasing your favorite CDs on vinyl. They're working hard to bring the tangible quality back to the music we listen to.

Noise Apparel | *noiseapparel.com*

Booking shows, selling t-shirts and donating 10% of all proceeds — Noise Apparel is a company started by two friends who simply want to help save the music scene.

Imago Solo | *imagosolo.com*

Imago Solo brings you t-shirts with simple, wordless designs that incorporate stories from the Bible and provoke your thoughts.

Pick A Pocket | *ywam.com*

Located in Germany, this YWAM branch started a girl's home where children facing extreme poverty can freely come and eat, make crafts and participate in other after-school programs.

Regent University | *regent.edu*

Located in Virginia Beach, Regent University is a global leader in equipping the youth of today with the education they need to fulfill their calling as a Christian leader. They represent over 45 countries around the world and offer study abroad programs.

Insomniac Folklore | *insomniacfolklore.com*

Ranging in ages 14-45, Insomniac Folklore has mastered the sing-along, acoustic, folk, '70s vibe. Check out their new full-length, titled *LP*, out now.

This is just a handful of the stories of cool people we met at Cornerstone.
To read up on 25 others, go to **hmmag.com**

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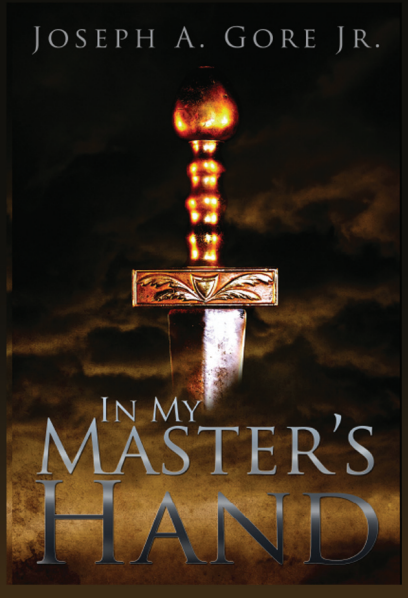

Darkness reigns. Evil governs the land.

For many years, only one has fought the Darkness.

His weapons are courage, skill and cold steel.

Though he has never suffered defeat, there is no victory.

Only Light can vanquish Darkness.

The Dawn is breaking...

IN MY MASTER'S HAND

A fantasy adventure available exclusively at Amazon.com.

COMEBACK KID

How in the world am I supposed to tell you about Comeback Kid and their newest album *Symptoms + Cures* in only 600 words? I could start by describing how incredibly hard this band works and their restless tour schedule, but you already know that. I could continue by describing how much they genuinely seem to still love what they do, but if you've ever seen this band live you already know that. I could give you all the clichés that bands seem to toss around with the release of a new record like heavier, faster, thrashier, more melodic, which all seem to fit their latest and greatest, but you've probably already come to expect it.

What you may not expect is that with *Symptoms + Cures*, Comeback Kid's particular brand of hardcore brings a new urgency to become "aware" of the world you live in as opposed to just taking things at face value. Vocalist Andrew Neufeld describes the title track, "I personally feel the world getting smaller. But, that is just my perspective, or age, or the fact that I'm roaming around constantly. Connections are made across oceans, which is cool. On the flip-side, we definitely see the security getting tighter when traveling so much, and sometimes through that there is a feeling that you don't have too much privacy, and it really isn't too hard for people to get information about other people even if it's not warranted. The world nowadays is fixated on stimulation and answers right away. In our world fear goes hand-in-hand with power. Oftentimes the 'cures' offered aren't the right solutions, but people are quick to jump headfirst into the unknown and others benefit from that. We are all guilty of it in one way or another."

Honesty was something that I wasn't really expecting when first assigned this piece, honesty about the music yes, about the touring, yes. But, when it came to a question about faith, what I expected was for him to simply dance around the issue with some pretty words that never really say what they believe.

"CBK is 'just a band.'" Neufeld says. "There are members who still have faith and members that don't. I used to be a believer and now I am not. Though we definitely have respect for others' beliefs and make a point as a band to be open to all walks of life. I don't judge and expect the same respect in return."

Comeback Kid will always have certain ties to Figure Four. So, I asked Andrew if it was frustrating to receive these comparisons. "It's not frustrating, it's more so flattering. Figure Four was my first touring band and gave me a start to touring in a hardcore band. We had some cool songs, some horrible-sounding recordings and one good one. We will never play again, but we never broke up. I don't ever feel the need to shut and lock too many doors in my life, because who knows how I will feel in a few years? Maybe when I'm 40 I'll want to get a jersey on and play a Figure Four reunion in Germany or (at) Cornerstone or something."

With new albums from veteran bands all kinds of expectations come. With their new record *Symptoms + Cures*, Comeback Kid exceeds them all. And, if you approach this new record with a bit of an open mind, it may help you to understand the world around you. Not too shabby for five dudes loving what they do and living out their hardcore fantasy.

[Photo by Luis Descartes]

BY JEF CUNNINGHAM

CORPUS CHRISTI

Replacing one band member is taxing enough, but few musicians can endure the loss of their entire band. Enter Corpus Christi guitarist/vocalist Jarrod Christman, who is the last man standing from the Christian metalcore upstart's original lineup.

Between the writing and recording sessions for Corpus Christi's 2009 debut on Victory Records, *The Darker Shades of White*, and those for this year's follow-up, *A Feast for Crows*, Christman had to cope with the departures of vocalist Will Henry, guitarist Jon Pauly, bassist Chris Towning and drummer Justin Evans.

"I was really sad to lose Jon especially," Christman says. "We had been playing together since the beginning of Corpus Christi and I knew him for a while before that. But as far as writing the new record, I think everything that happened in terms of member changes improved the band as a whole."

Christman gradually replaced each of his counterparts and rebooted the band. In an interesting twist, Corpus Christi's merch slinger for the 2009 tour, Max O'Connell, came onboard in Henry's slot as "dirty" vocalist.

"Max is really dynamic and charismatic onstage, and he relates to the audience well," Christman says. "He went from merch man to frontman in less than a year, but he's really good at it."

Corpus Christi – now comprising Christman, O'Connell, guitarist Derek Ayres, bassist Caleb Rhoads and drummer Andy Poling – convened in early 2010 to begin writing the material that would become *Feast*. Christman says everything flowed well from day one.

"This process was probably the most collaborative writing I've ever done," Christman says. "Derek is an incredibly proficient guitar player, and we were challenging each other to grow throughout the whole process."

Christman adds that the band felt an emotional attachment to all the new material.

"We had to dig deep for these songs. There are no throwaway riffs or chords anywhere. As a result, I have a greater sense of pride about what we've created."

Christman says that he drew heavily on personal experience when composing the lyrics for the new album.

"Some songs are about our inner struggles, others are about conflicts we have with each other, and others are about conflicts we have with society or our spiritual leaders," he says. "What I've always tried to write my songs around the idea that, at the end of any conflict, there's hope – that unfailing hope that we all have because of what we've found in Christ. That's what we center everything around."

During the sessions, Christman says he was reading the fourth volume in George R.R. Martin's epic saga *A Song for Ice and Fire*, which is also titled *A Feast for Crows*. He decided to appropriate the book's title for the new Corpus Christi album after a vivid dream.

"I woke up from a dream one morning, and in the dream I had seen this brutal battlefield. It was kind of a dark dream, I guess," Christman says with a laugh. "The battlefield was littered with corpses, and the only sound was the sound of crows swarming all over the place."

He told the other members about his dream and they all agreed that the name *A Feast for Crows* was a perfect fit for the dark lyrical content of the record. "[The title] is metaphoric in a sense, because throughout all of human existence the only two constants that everyone experiences are conflict and death," Christman says. "Without the hope we have in Christ, all we are is a 'feast for crows' strewn out on a desolate field of conflict."

BY JEFF SISTRUNK

THE AFTERS

"We've been working on this for a year, so we've really had some time to refine the melodies and lyrics and get them to the place we want them to be."

Photos: Esther Havens

Josh Havens wants to ignore the past, everyone else wants him to repeat it. That's the tension for any successful musician when writing the follow-up to a hit album, and in the case of The Afters frontman, along with Matt Fuqua, it's a tension they're already familiar with.

That's because The Afters already experienced this once before when recording their sophomore release, *Never Going Back to OK*. After the band's debut, 2005's *I Wish We All Could Win*, the Dallas-based act had to make good on their Best New Artist win at the Dove Awards. Their second album then hit #41 on the Billboard charts, and the title track became the most-played song at Christian Hit Radio in 2008. Now with *Light Up The Sky*, Havens hopes the third time is the charm.

"If you're a songwriter that does well, you're going to have people within your work camp tell you to go write the same song again," Havens says. "We've had people who've asked us to take our most successful songs and duplicate them. But, as an artist, that's never satisfying. We want to continue to make music that is excellent and music that stands out. Our goal is to always make a record that's better than the previous one. I love this one and it's my favorite we've done so far."

As they prepped to record their latest, Havens describes wiping the slate clean as the most important act to begin with. It's a move that might frighten the powers-that-be, yet it's essential in starting out the process right.

"When we go in, we clean the slate, because we never want to make the same record over again," Havens explains. "So we've tried not to repeat ourselves. We want it to stay fresh and interesting both for us and our fans. So, we go into any new record and know that we're writing a snapshot of what has happened over the last couple of years. I don't journal, but I can make records and that becomes my way of journaling."

Havens mentions Animal Collective, Muse and Radiohead as some overall favorites, but that this latest also holds a love of current Top 40 fare. It's an interesting shift for a band that won Best Rock Album at the 2009 Dove Awards.

"On this album, we wouldn't stop writing the song until we felt it was catchy and infectious and wouldn't leave your head," Havens says. "We also had the luxury of time. We've been working on this for a year, so we've really had some time to refine the melodies and lyrics and get them to the place we want them to be. The liberty of time gives you the opportunity to come back to things after sitting with them and visiting for a while.

"There is something to be said for writing in the moment, but I'm somebody who sits on things," he continues. "I mull over lyrics and the music. I'm not someone who blurts something out and is happy with that immediately. I know a lot of artists work that way, and I sometimes wish that I could, but I need to mull over it and come back and tweak things to make them better."

The early signs are strong for *Light Up The Sky* as the title track has already found placement on MTV's *The Hills* and both an American and European tour slate remain full. In the end, it seems both artist and audience win again as The Afters successfully fill another blank slate.

BY MATT CONNER

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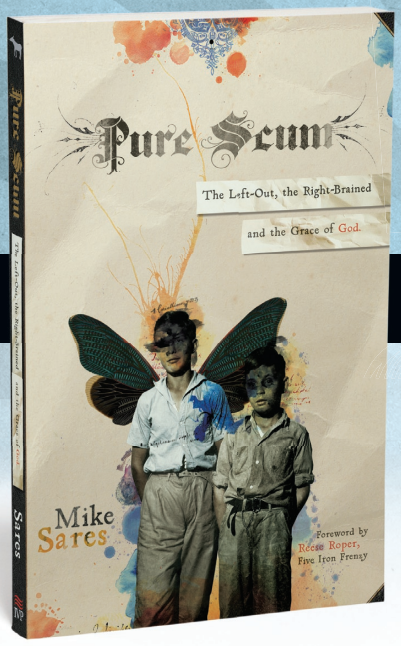

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While packing into the indoor portion of the Emo's venue in Austin, I noticed that Living Sacrifice was sporting a new stand-in member. 'Twas none other than the 2008 HM Readers' Poll "Favorite Guitarist" award winner – Josh Childers. When later asked what he might be thinking when he looks back at the LS guys he's on stage with, he jokingly admits that he has entertained the thought, "Man, I wish I was in this band" … and not just once or twice … but, "about every 30 seconds or so."

Now, while this might be a worrisome thought to some fans of The Showdown, we offer this consolation: Don't fret over this. Childers is one of the good guys. He just happens to be so talented that an excellent and prominent band of LS's caliber would ask him to fill in when necessary.

"They're just a really good band," Childers elaborates. "They've been one of the biggest bands in my life for a long time, but actually playing with those guys you can tell that Lance and Bruce have been playing in a band together for 20 years or whatever. They're completely tight. The chemistry they have is pretty out-of-this-world."

The fact that Childers has been filling in for LS on some live dates would, understandably, make a bystander wonder what was going on with The Showdown, but that's only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to factors that could break a band in two. Turns out their new second guitarist is none other than Patrick Judge (from Demon Hunter). Their drummer for the past year or so – Yogi (who also plays for Demon Hunter) – has since left The Showdown, moving out of the place he shared with vocalist David Bunton. They have a new drummer in Isaac Harris and a new bassist with Jeremiah Scott. Scott moved from Houston, Texas to Nashville, Tennessee (has a band called Destroy, Destroy, Destroy) and also produced *Blood in the Gears*.

What could have been a really stressful time for Bunton and Childers striving to keep their band going has instead turned out to be almost easy. "It's been cool," Bunton explains, "especially doing the record. It's been really natural, because we had friends come who wanted to be in the band. Like, Yogi was doing the Demon Hunter thing and he liked us and we already had a relationship with him. He's not playing with us anymore, but that was a really positive thing. Patrick, Yogi and Jeremiah we knew from touring with Demon Hunter and Living Sacrifice. It's cool, because it hasn't been me and Josh trying to scramble to find people who know the music to be with us and keep the band alive. It's been more like friends coming in who wanted to come in and be a part of it who were excited about doing a new record and it shows. All that's been super positive. I think it's been a really good thing for us live, too. We're having a ball with ourselves onstage. I don't want to discredit any of the lineups that we've had in the past, but with this lineup it feels like we're just getting started. I'm excited about that."

Childers likes the current lineup, too, and how it affected the album. "It was super stripped-down and we kept it tight and slick. We did a lot more this time around guitar-wise, with overdubs and all that. The vibe is a little more raw, which is actually more production there."

Patrick Judge chimes in: "This album is influenced heavily by Southern rock, like Pantera." It was funny when The Showdown was doing line checks before their set at Cornerstone. At one point the sound man asked the band to play one of their samples. Pantera's "Walk" came screaming out of the monitors. "Heck yeah, The Showdown listens to that band. With this record, all we listened to was Pantera, Down, Black Label Society. You are supposed to ride a motorcycle while listening to this." It's not coincidence, then, that a motorcycle engine starts off the album's opening track, "The Man Named Hell."

Like the denim jacket that adorns the cover of *Blood in the Gears*, this album finds the band comfortable in their skin. "It's more about us as dudes hanging out and playing music," states Bunton, "rather than having the coolest T-shirt designs or stage props or the coolest this or that. I think we've definitely learned that the only thing that we have to do as a band is show up and play and do our best and have a lot of fun. That's what I've learned most over the past couple years. I just want to have fun and play music and don't want to worry about everything else. Especially over the past year with the band, and having a lot of members quit, a lot of dudes I thought I couldn't be in a band without. It's been neat to have people come and want to play with us, and The Showdown being a place where you can have your input and have a part of the writing process and be involved. It's a lot of fun right now; I'm really pumped on that. Every opportunity we get to play a show – there's definitely been times that we didn't appreciate stuff, and didn't appreciate the fact that we were on tour – but now, like, we just did six shows and a couple headlining shows, and it was a blast. The last six months or so we've really enjoyed it and I'm looking forward to playing more shows."

"I've never been interested in being the guy who comes out and says, 'We're going to do this redneck thrash thing,'" explains Childers. "That's not the majority of what I listen to, but that's what this band is best at. We all fill out each other's strengths and weaknesses and have been trying different things over the course of the years to see what we are and aren't good at. We take it as it comes. I've got side projects for so many other things that I personally choose to do, but what we do with The Showdown is really fun because we've gotten to the point where we're at least somewhat talented at what we do. I feel like I can put it out there and be proud of it."

To their credit, The Showdown hasn't put out a clunker album yet. *Blood in the Gears* continues the tradition of quality, blunt-level-trauma metal. But the band has ratcheted things several notches with the words they've composed, too.

"I feel like me and Dave finally made our statement," boasts Childers. "We were underground for a lot of years, coming into this thing as youth group kids, and basically telling Bible stories the metal way, and then getting more narcissistic and doing the introspection thing and hoping that someone would be interested in that and identify with it. This time, we talk about a lot of social issues and the evil of centralized authorities and government run amok and stuff like that. Just real societal issues that I feel like, especially with what's going on in the world right now, just need to be heard."

They'll be heard, alright. It's just a question of how much foam will insulate the sound from the ears taking their message in. It's coming over loud and proud.

✖

THE SHOWDOWN

BY DOUG VAN PELT

DISCIPLE

BY BIANCA MONTES

"When somebody decides to go, you can't really make somebody do something they don't want to do. We've been Disciple for a long time, we're brothers and we've been around the world together..."

Photo: David Molnar

As it says in the great book, there is a time for everything, and nearly two decades after their formation in high school, American rock band Disciple has entered a season of change. From the 2008 departure of Brad Noah, due to a battle with Les Paul Scoliosis, and the recent departure of drummer Tim Barrett, Kevin Young was left to lead a whole new version of Disciple.

"Honestly, it is up and down," Young commented about the impact of losing his bandmates. "When somebody decides to go, you can't really make somebody do something they don't want to do. We've been Disciple for a long time, we're brothers and we've been around the world together. I know once you've done it [be in a band] for so long, sometimes, it's time to go, and it's tough because you don't want the person to go. But, we kept moving on."

Heading into the writing process without an original vision for their eighth studio album, *Horseshoes and Hand Grenades*, the newest members of Disciple had a lot to prove with their first opportunity writing for the band.

"We did not know what to expect, "Young says. "We didn't know what the songs were going to sound like, and we didn't know if it was going to sound like the old Disciple or if it was going to be this whole new version."

While growth might add freshness to a band that has been around as long as Disciple, change is something that fans are not likely to welcome with open arms, let us not forget the 2009 release of *Southern Hospitality*. While critics such as jesusfreakhideout.com guaranteed the album to be "packing enough energy to power a small country," here at HM the album was referenced to "taste worse than watered-down sweet tea."

"We wrote, like, 25 songs for that album [*Southern Hospitality*] and not all the songs had that sound. For some reason, it was just the songs that we liked. In all reality, I think we really made a mistake, we picked the wrong songs. It was just one of those things our fans didn't connect with."

Southern rock most definitely will not be rearing its ugly head on the September 14th release of *Horseshoes and Hand Grenades*; however, fans should be prepared for a little something new and plenty of variety.

"In my opinion the album is split half and half," Young explaines. "It's half a real heavy rocking album, borderline heavy metal. Half the album is definitely songs that not everybody will like. They're songs that I would like because they're heavy, hard and make you wanna drive fast. The other half is, I would say, very commercial. You say the word commercial and people may have different reactions with that, but I guess what I mean by commercial is that they are songs that anybody would like. There are no slow songs or ballad songs on the album, but there are a lot of good commercial songs."

Refusing to forget the fans that thrive on Disciple's metal roots and gritty cries to the Lord, the band made sure to offer a sound just for them on the album.

"We just wrote songs, and we were just looking for the best ones. At the end of it, the best ones weren't as heavy, so we actually ended up having to come back and write heavier songs. I feel that it's important for us to be a heavier band, because of the ministry that we have, and the type of kids that we need to reach. If it [the album] is too one way, you're only going to reach a certain group, but we've always been there for the heavy kids out there, and we don't intend on leaving them anytime soon."

Already hitting airwaves in heavy rotation, their first single, "Dear X" addresses the negative part of life before we knew Christ and how those issues try to hold you back in your walk with Christ.

"That song talks about looking back at the things before we knew Christ, and how they're kinda hanging around [like ex-girlfriends]. They still got your number and they try to call you every once in a while and you're kind of like, 'Hey I've moved on. I have a new love, which is Christ.'"

Addressing the serious issues of depression, the hopefully-to-be second single "Invisible" reaches out to just about anyone listening.

"For the past three years, every show to every other show, somebody has walked up to me, and talked about how they had attempted to commit suicide last night or last week or last month, or that they're cutting or on anxiety medication, depression medication, all these types of things, and I had the opportunity to talk to this guy that was a cutter," Young recalled explaining the motive behind the song. "I asked him to help me understand why this happens [the cutting], because I didn't understand it. He said, 'I cut, because I feel that nobody can hear me and nobody listens to me.' And that just changed my life, that night, when he told me that, and I couldn't stop thinking about it. So we wrote this song, "Invisible," it's really for people that feel that way.

"The feelings are true, and the feelings tell them things like, 'Nobody can hear you, nobody sees you, nobody cares about you.' But actually, nothing can be further from the truth. In John chapter 17, the day before Jesus dies, He is praying in the garden, and His prayer is, 'God, My prayer is that they,' meaning us the world, 'will know that you love them as much as You love Me.' There is so much in that statement, when you think about God loves us as much as Jesus. When someone who is into cutting, thinking of suicide, when they find out the truth, that they are loved, that there is somebody that not just loves them, but loves them as much as the most ultimate gift, the most ultimate thing that can ever exist in the universe. [He] not only loves us that much, but hears us, sees us, wants to be involved in our lives, when they see the truth and they see the light, I think that's when change happens."

Drawn to a ministry where the Lord calls for you to take on such heavy burdens from your audience it is interesting to see why so many bands today chose to lose the label of a "Christian band."

"I love and hate it," Young says, offering his opinion on the matter. "I love it in a sense that I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I want to be able to stand before God one day and say that I took what He gave me and obeyed Him with it.

"But, in the other sense, I absolutely hate it and despise it, because it is the only style of music that gets segregated because of what the artist is saying. Any other artist can say whatever they want to say, and they don't get separated. Christian music is the only thing that separates the style and what the artist is saying."

✖

FOR AS UNFORGIVING AS HE SOUNDS ON *THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL*, A PLEA FOR PURGING FRONTMAN, ANDY ATKINS IS CHEERY AND RELAXED. FOUR YEARS ON THE ROAD HAVE CERTAINLY SOFTENED HIS SLOW TENNESSEE DRAWL, BUT BITS OF SOUTHERN FLAVOR SLIP PAST WHEN HE RAISES HIS INFLECTION, "I DON'T KNOW WHAT 'CHRISTIAN BAND' MEANS ANY MORE. I RUN FROM THAT, BECAUSE IF YOU LOOK BACK IN, HECK, OTHER HM ARTICLES THAT I'VE DONE AND OTHER INTERVIEWS I'VE DONE IN THE PAST WITH ANY OTHER MAGAZINE OR RADIO, YES I'VE SAID WE ARE A CHRISTIAN BAND AND NOW MAYBE I'M QUESTIONING WHAT THAT MEANS."

When the band isn't on tour A Plea for Purging is still hard at work tinkering with their new live set, as well as working to promote the new album. "It seems like everything on this record has been such a hassle and a hard time and a hurdle to jump over with every process," Atkins says, "but it's worth it, because we're all more proud of this record than anything we've ever done in our band's careers. All of us are so stoked with everyone's performance on the record and the songwriting and the lyrics, we feel like it's the product we've been trying to put out for the past three years."

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell isn't just Plea's newest release. It's the culmination of three years of touring, watching, listening and working. 2009's *Depravity* forced the entire band to cut deep into themselves and come clean with what was truly inside each piece of A Plea for Purging. "We just really had to open ourselves up and be honest with ourselves and each other, like, the four other guys in the band, and be transparent with each other so we could be transparent and open with a listener. We've experienced so much in the past four years of touring, been lied to enough and been misled enough to realize that honesty is the most important thing to us as a band. First off, as friends, if you're going to spend all day every day with these dudes that you call your family and your friends then you need to be honest with them and I think it's really important to be honest with your listeners and not try to write this product or put out this picture-perfect, plastic version of yourself or of Christianity for that fact. If we're a quote, unquote, Christian band, I don't want to put out this false image of what we are or who we are."

While *Depravity* was generally well received, there were definite risks involved. The band was trending into darker material than their debut, and with the breed of honesty committed to the album comes the overwhelming potential for judgment. "With *Depravity,* a huge hurdle was allowing myself to be so open and so transparent with people even though it might inevitably change their opinion of you and me or my band with the topics being darker, some people weren't stoked on the fact that we were being so dark … as long as we're honest about everything, we can end with integrity and that's probably the most important thing to us, that whenever this band is over we feel like we were honest and had integrity the whole time."

It's that honest and open quality that separates Plea from every other heavy band in a scene that has been over-saturated with riffs and breakdowns. "Getting over that hurdle of trying to be honest and trying to speak openly on *Depravity* allowed me to, really, I didn't have to deal with being scared of being open or honest this time around and really just write like I feel and write like I see things. Writing *Depravity* was really freeing and I think it really changed the pace of our band and what we feel we can say as a Christian band. It was a good deal for us to write *Depravity* and get past that and we'll move past the stuff that we wrote on this record – everything's a growing process."

With 30 just around the corner, Andy is quickly becoming the old man in a young man's game and with that veteran status comes a lifetime of assessment. The guys in A Plea for Purging are still striving to jam their way across the country and to impact the lives they touch. With that intimidating milestone sneaking up they're starting to question whole new elements of their band, things like whether or not you can raise a family on heavy metal, the motivations of strangers and the very nature of God and Christianity.

"I don't think God cares about my metal band. You don't have to go out on the road to be used by God, you can stay home and scoop ice at Sonic and God can use you… For me, realizing that Christ is the Redeemer and trying to bless God and glorify God in everything you do by trying to follow the teachings of Christ, that's the really simple, Sunday school version of what Christianity is, that's the basis. We could talk theology forever, but that's not the point. I believe that Christ is my Redeemer, so I'm gonna follow His teachings, I'm gonna try to glorify God in everything I do. I can't say that that's what modernized American Christianity is at all points in time, and so it's kinda hard. What the word 'Christianity' has turned into – that's kinda what *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is all about, just the fact that Christianity is being marketed as a product, God is being sold as an article of commerce in a way. If this is our passion, hobby, career, whatever you wanna call this band, as far as the world goes, it's the most important thing we have, then our relationship with Christ and our belief in God are going to make themselves evident in what we're doing because we're trying to glorify God … that's our goal in our personal lives, but at the same time we're trying to figure out how to do that without marketing His Name, because I feel like that's been done. I'm sure that we've been a part of the problem. I find it crazy that there is this industry set up just to market God's Name, basically. I've had some people argue that we are or aren't [a Christian band], because of our song's topics and not saying the word 'Jesus' on all of our records, but anyway, I follow Christ, the people in my band follow Christ, so we're trying to make the glory of God known in what we're doing."

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A PLEA FOR PURGING

BY NATHAN DOYLE

"For me, realizing that Christ is the Redeemer and trying to bless God and glorify God in everything you do by trying to follow the teachings of Christ, that's the really simple, Sunday School, version of what Christianity is."

CHILDREN 18:3

Photo: Ethan Luck

"We wanted to take what we know about growing up in middle class suburban America, about having big dreams in a small city and having to fight for those dreams and then dealing with disappointment."

OUSE OF HEROES

Vocal mutants. Not exactly the stuff of press releases and musical bios, but producer Mark Lee Townsend raves about the guys in House of Heroes in rather unexpected ways. Hence the following: "They're a bunch of mutants. Working with House of Heroes is like having a band full of Chris Cornells."

Townsend loves them. And he's not the only one. Vocalist Tim Skipper concedes that the band's over-the-top vocal work and tight harmonies became the calling card for the Columbus, Ohio sextet on their last album, *The End Is Not The End*. Then again, Skipper laughs when confronted with Townsend's comparison to the Soundgarden front: "I don't know about that. [Cornell] is one of the best rock singers out there."

No matter the comparison, it's clear that House of Heroes isn't your normal rock band armed with your typical rock vocals. Each member has choral work in his background along with some level of vocal training, creating a perfect scenario for Townsend to realize a dream of working with a band capable of Beatles-esque turns.

"The first time we worked with Mark on *The End Is Not The End*," Skipper explains, "he had always wanted to work with a band who could vocally do what The Beatles and Queen did in terms of standing around a mic and sing the harmonies in one take. Fortunately, we were all vocally blessed, you could say. We went in to try it and it all went amazingly smooth. It's funny, because Mark said it might take a long time to get the balance right, but it only took 10 minutes."

Perhaps the reason the band could pull off such a feat is the fact that they are so talented. Townsend believes few bands share their overall ability and says that the signs were there from the beginning.

"They've been good for a long time," Townsend explains. "Even back on their first album, they were already a good band. The thing that has developed over time is just how great the vocals are, especially the backing vocals. Pretty much from the beginning, they've just had this crazy level of talent on every level. They all play their instruments well. They all sing great. So it's almost like sideways growth instead of leaps and bounds growth ahead.

"Tim Skipper is an awesome singer," he continues. "I've worked with a lot of good singers and he's right up there in my opinion. He's got a background in choir music in high school. When you have guys who can sing and work out parts, it really is going to have a trademark sound. And that's definitely part of the House of Heroes sound."

The sound is a bit different on the band's latest effort, *Suburba*, as the band settles into a new lyrical and musical direction. As Townsend explains, Skipper and the rest of House of Heroes – A.J. Babcock, Josh Dun, Eric Newcomer, Colin Rigsby and Jared Rigsby – rushed to finish a project on a shorter timeline because of touring opportunities.

"This one we were a little rushed on," Townsend says. "They had already gotten a slot on the TobyMac and Skillet tour. Unfortunately, that happens a lot with bands I work with. You'd love to have more time and songs to choose from, but we just whittled some things down and got a vision for each song. The original demos were raw, but that's great. It was enough to be able to hear the basics, but they didn't come to life until we just started assembling them. We just let the songs go where they were going and let the lyrics direct the record more than anything."

The lyrics moved the boys toward memories of home in Columbus, a challenge issued by a Springsteen line of all things. "There was a Bruce Springsteen quote we used where he said, 'The best songs come out of what you know on a personal level,'" Skipper says. "We said, 'There we go. That's how we write this album.' We wanted to take what we know about growing up in middle-class suburban America, about having big dreams in a small city and having to fight for those dreams and then dealing with disappointment."

Even though the band knew they would focus on their upbringing, the original vision was much different – and much more dramatic – than the final results. While the new songs are epic in nature, the storyline was meant to originally follow such musical descriptions.

"When we started writing the album, it was very conceptual," Skipper explains. "We were going to actually write a linear story – sort of a rock musical to an extent. But that got too hard. We got to a point where we had no way to end it and all of the songs were super-long and drawn out. So we said, 'Let's just write really anthemic American songs.' That sounds weird at first, I guess, to write about such epic, anthemic themes about suburbia, but you just have to hear it and how it gets pulled off. So the album is heavily themed, but it's not a concept album or that story that we set out to make at first."

"We actually wrote three or four songs that we never bothered recording that fit into the story," he continues. "We just didn't have a way to end it, so those songs are pretty long and nothing happened with them. The songs were really cool and I'd love to record those on an EP and put that out and direct people and say, 'Hey, if you put these songs together, there's a great story.' There was a murder and an uncle who was a cop who was a father figure to the main character who ended up murdering this guy and running from him. It's a cool, in-depth story, but it became too much."

As they shared their childhood memories, the band's songwriting rules took effect, forcing all involved to come up with the musical backdrop to accompany lyrics mostly belonging to Babcock.

"We have an unspoken rule that no one is allowed to write a song by himself," Skipper says. "We all come from such different musical backgrounds and our tastes are so different, so when we combine them, it creates this thing that's greater than the sum of its parts. So when someone has an idea, it's usually smaller to start with. Then when we all get a hold of it, the vision becomes huge and then we execute it in the studio."

For anyone who might be afraid their favorite alt-rock band has taken a left turn along the way, you can relax. The band and their producer assure you that despite new interests or areas of emphasis, the pieces of the typical HoH puzzle are in place.

"It's a different animal than *The End Is Not The End*," Townsend explains. "It's not quite so proggy. Overall, though, there are some songs on it that go back to the last record. But it's a cool record. It's got all of the typical House of Heroes elements – great vocals, good melodies, interesting lyrics."

✖

BY MATT CONNER

WHEN LEGENDARY POET DYLAN THOMAS COMPOSED "POEM ON HIS BIRTHDAY" IN 1949, HE WAS 35 AND IN THE MIDST OF AN UNCERTAIN PERIOD IN HIS LIFE. THE LANGUAGE IN THAT POPULAR PIECE IS RIFE WITH ANGUISH, DOUBT AND, ULTIMATELY, HOPE. 60 YEARS AFTER THOMAS FIRST PUBLISHED THE POEM, ANBERLIN FRONTMAN STEPHEN CHRISTIAN FOUND INSPIRATION IN ITS LYRICALLY BEAUTIFUL BLEND OF DESPAIR AND OPTIMISM. A PHRASE FROM ITS SIXTH STANZA EVENTUALLY BECAME THE TITLE OF ANBERLIN'S FIFTH STUDIO ALBUM: *DARK IS THE WAY, LIGHT IS A PLACE*.

"I wanted the title of the new record to be a reflection of the music, and Thomas' words were just that," Christian says. "The whole life of Dylan Thomas was like a conundrum. It feels like he battled with God constantly. One poem would be about how much he loved and appreciated God, and the next would be like, 'I don't know if there's a Heaven.' ['Poem on His Birthday'] absolutely struck me because it was, again, about that internal struggle. [Thomas] was onto another year and still felt incomplete and lost and didn't understand what life was doing to him. But there was still that glimpse of hope, like 'dark is the way' – this world may be heavy at moments and there will be trials and tribulations, but at the end of the day, there's hope."

Just as Thomas was at the time he penned "Poem on His Birthday," the members of Anberlin are at an important juncture. They're on the brink of completing their transition from radio-friendly, pop-inflected rock to darker, headier work.

"All of us knew that we wanted to make an album that we've never made before," drummer Nathan Young says. "It had to be a huge progression from anything we've done in the past."

To that effect, Christian says that the songs on *Dark is the Way, Light is a Place* is much heavier than those on Anberlin's previous releases.

"The material on the new record is heavy – and I don't mean that's its hard and distorted – I mean it feels physically and emotionally heavy," Christian says. "Sonically, the whole record is dense and has a weighty feel. Then you have the lyrics and the meaning and the message behind the songs. [The record] gives you the sense that there is light at the end of this proverbial tunnel called life."

Young agrees that fans can expect an entirely new Anberlin on the record.

"It's more mature and focused – or at least that's what we want people to hear," Young says. "We're definitely darker and more driven as a rock band. There's no more pop – sorry kids."

To help stretch their abilities and form the sonic identity of the album, Anberlin brought superstar producer and multiple Grammy winner Brendan O'Brien into the fold. Christian says O'Brien actually contacted the band about producing the new album.

"When Brendan O'Brien comes knocking at your door, asking to work on your album, it's a no-brainer," Christian says. "He's an incredible producer and musician. I mean, he's produced Bruce Springsteen, Pearl Jam, Rage Against the Machine and Bob Dylan. Let's be honest, he's totally out of our league. When Brendan walked into the room, we stepped up our game. We were focused and wanted to be the best we could as musicians and performers. You can hear it in the music; everything seems in its right place … and it's not because we're great necessarily, it's because Brendan always had the right suggestions and always knew how to bring the best out in the songs."

Christian says that, with O'Brien at the helm, the writing and recording processes for the new album flowed smoothly from beginning to end in almost every respect.

"I had no idea how easy this record would be compared to all the others, because for some reason this record felt like all the puzzle pieces absolutely fit," he ays. "It just felt like, when things seemed like they couldn't possibly get better, they got better.

ANBERLIN

BY JEFF SISTRUNK

Three of my favorite songs on the record, Christian [McAlhaney, guitarist] wrote within two weeks of going into the studio. At the last second, he was like, 'man, listen to this.' And I was just blown away. It was unbelievable."

When writing the lyrics for *Dark is the Way, Light is a Place,* Christian says he drew most of his inspiration from stories and accounts of historical events he'd read. For example, one of the lead singles, "We Owe This to Ourselves," was inspired by the life and message of iconic civil rights giant, Martin Luther King Jr.

"The song's premise is about King and how, towards the end of his life, he started to express the belief that maybe his dream would never be fulfilled and maybe things weren't going to work out," Christian says. "He even predicted in one of his sermons: 'I don't know how much longer I'm going to be with you guys.' It's like, even if the shepherd is gone, don't scatter the sheep, and keep fighting. We wanted to promote the message that, with things that are meaningful in life, with theologies or philosophies that are true and just and right, they're going to stand the test of time even if the shepherd dies."

Anberlin have long been known for concluding their albums with epic, expansive songs, and Christian says that the new record is no exception. However, the closer for *Dark is the Way, Light is a Place,* "Depraved," evolved from a more unconventional songwriting process.

"When it came to writing for the closer, we told Brendan, 'This is what we do. Just let us go off.'" Christian says. "All we do is experiment and goof off. This time we mixed it up and tried to figure out a new formula for doing it. Nathan wrote the song. When he gave it to me, I was like, 'Nathan, this is great, it's incredible.' Instead of writing any lyrics, I started to sing along with whatever the song seemed to be directing me to do. I sent it to the guys, and they insisted that it go on the record."

There has been much debate over the years about Anberlin's status as a Christian rock act, but Christian says he's never really understood the meaning of the tag and, moreover, he thinks that media outlets' attempts to pigeonhole the band into the genre are missing the point.

"It's never truly made sense to me," Christian says. "I mean, what's a 'Christian' band supposed to look like? How are they supposed to dress? How are they supposed to sound? For me, it comes down to my personal relationship with God. I only know how to be myself, and to do what I believe God wants me to do. I think everything is ministry; tags are unimportant."

Dark is the Way, Light is a Place may resonate with old fans and newcomers alike, or it may alienate some listeners with its heavier sound. Either way, Christian says he's ecstatic about the final product.

"This is our statement about how far we've come as a band," he says. "We just hope that the message of hope touches our audience."

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Photo: Parker Young

FOR SOMEONE WHO'S NEVER TOURED, I QUICKLY REALIZED HOW SEVERELY UNPREPARED I WAS FOR THE CRAMPED, HOT, AND UTTERLY EXHAUSTING CONDITIONS OF LIFE ON THE ROAD. AT THIS POINT IN THE SCHEDULE I WAS RIDING OUT THE THIRD DAY OF A KILLER MIGRAINE. I MADE THE MISTAKE OF LEAVING MY GLASSES BEHIND, AND WITHOUT THEM IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE I START TO FEEL THE DRIVING PAIN IN MY SKULL, AND THE CONDITIONS OF THIS TOUR DON'T EXACTLY HELP. SO, WHEN FOR TODAY'S MIKE REYNOLDS ASKED FOR PRAYER REQUESTS AT THE AFTERNOON'S BIBLE STUDY, I WAS GLAD TO PITCH MY CONCERN...

...AND THEN SOMETHING DIFFERENT HAPPENED.

BY NATHAN DOYLE

DAVID MORRISON
The financial genius behind the band, handles the books and works full time as the in-house booking agent for Facedown Records. Enjoys skydiving, poker and cliff diving.

MIKE REYNOLDS
The teacher, Mike is personable and has incredible insight, frequently goes running after load-in. Wears his hair in an insanely classy comb-over that seems far too dapper for a metalcore band.

MATTIE MONTGOMERY
The voice of For Today, a reformed English major who speaks with the passion and authority of a civil rights leader.

BRANDON LEITRU
The heart and soul of For Today, Brandon is the encourager of the group and is getting married October 9th. (Send him a toaster)

RYAN LEITRU
The father figure, Ryan hates public speaking and being told he looks like Bam Margera. Can score free Chipotle 60% of the time with his Chipotle tattoo.

Candice Montgomery: Mattie's wife and the band's light tech, matches Mike's level of spiritual insight. Speaks with a subtle Southern drawl that hints at a great story. Brenton House: For Today's merch guy, could easily double as a bouncer, has an insane stage-dive.

Photos on pages 38-40: Tom Medvedich

Mike turned around and looked at Candice Montgomery, a petite, soft-spoken woman, maybe 5'1" and 100 pounds, and said, "Everyone you've touched on this tour has been healed, wanna give it a shot?" She looked like a contestant on the Price Is Right, a moment's hesitation, followed by sheer joy. After a few preliminary questions Candice stopped for a second and took a step back like a painter facing a canvas, and said, "Do you want it to go away?" She was talking about my vision problems, not just my migraine. I was speechless.

I haven't needed my glasses since.

Rewind six days earlier at the Amos in Charlotte, North Carolina. "There was this girl behind me on crutches and immediately the Lord said to me, 'If you pray for her, I will heal her.'" Candice tells her story with the same enthusiasm she showed at Bible study, just thrilled to share what God's done.

Turns out the girl was recovering from leukemia and hadn't walked in over six months. Doctors had to remove part of her right knee to surgically rebuild her right hip, which resulted in her being completely unable to put weight on that leg.

"As we were praying she said that her knee was burning and we all stopped and asked her how her knee felt. She straightened her leg out, took two steps, handed me her crutches and said, 'I don't need these anymore.' God had completely healed her knee."

It's that faith in an all-powerful and loving God that For Today screams from the stage, and kids are responding. Frontman Mattie Montgomery utilizes a bold vocal delivery to declare a bolder message, that there is truth, and his name is Jesus Christ.

"I had a kid come up to me in Douglasville, Georgia and say, 'I don't know Jesus, but I want to more than anything.'" Mattie says. "I don't have a way to explain Jesus to you that makes it feel warm and fuzzy and fun and make you cool and popular and all that, but the only Jesus that I know is a Jesus that demands everything from you and often times calls you to do things that hurt and are very self-sacrificial and uncomfortable and he calls me into a place of vulnerability and transparency a lot.

"That's just the Jesus that I'm preaching, and the way that kids have been responding on this tour is just desperation, because kids don't care about feeling good about themselves, there's a million self-help books, we could watch friggin' Dr. Phil if we wanted to feel good about ourselves, kids want truth. And so I tell them, well, this is what God requires of you, and if you're willing to lay your life down, you're going to get so much more in return than you could possibly imagine, and they respond to it with desperation and urgency. It's not like a, 'okay, that sounds pretty cool' kids are like, 'I need what you have. I don't know how to get it, I don't know where to turn, I don't know

who to talk to, but I need it more than I need my next breath.' And I believe that's the mark of our generation, that we need truth more than we need air or food or friends or popularity or comfort and kids are responding to truth on this tour."

Mattie constantly speaks with the intensity of conviction, and it's addicting. In nearly six years together For Today has grown from a local band playing Norma Jean covers in drummer David Morrison's garage to headlining one of the summer's biggest tours and traveling across the world to play for hundreds of kids. While the For Today ministry is obviously directed towards their audience, the passion they inspire in the bands they tour with cannot be overlooked.

"The headlining band of any tour sets the standard of how the tour's gonna run and determines a lot about the comfort of other bands and the fun that the other bands have," Mike explains. "We came into this like, you know what, we're going to pray every day with the bands, we're gonna have Bible studies, we're going to set the spiritual climate, the spiritual thermostat, and move forward so that we're all able to come together as brothers and sisters in the Lord instead of bands that are competing for a crowd response. We're in this together and if we are who we say we are as believers in the Lord, then we're all working towards the same goal, the healing and deliverance of the nation."

Mattie takes that drive a step further, by constantly challenging himself and those under his leadership, both his bandmates and the opening acts. "The only thing that keeps us unified and keeps us grounded and keeps us focused is the Word of God and prayer. Without those two things any band that claims the name of Jesus will fail. And to take it a step further, without those two things any band period will fail. You may be Metallica and have sold millions of copies and be the biggest band ever, but you're a failure if you're not rooted in prayer and the word of God.

"For years I was too cool to call myself a Christian, and then when I actually started talking to Jesus and listening, he said, 'Why won't you call yourself a Christian? It means 'little Christ' and if you don't do it, even if you're the only person who does it right, you're going to abandon it to people who are just gonna do it wrong.' There's a lot of very half-hearted, lukewarm people that run around calling themselves Christians and for me to say, well, I don't wanna associate myself with those people, is for me to abandon the name of Christ to people who don't revere it. So, to bands that are like, 'oh, well, we're not a Christian band, we're Christians in a band' you're abandoning the one that died for you and you're spitting on the cross.

"Jesus said, 'The same things that I have done, greater you will also do,' and so, if we as Christians aren't doing the same things that Jesus did and greater... Let me offer more scripture, 'If any man is in Christ, he should walk as Christ walked.' When the Pharisees came to him and wanted him to tell the disciples to shut up, he said, 'if they remain silent the stones themselves will cry out.' And so, I don't know where people get off thinking that they're not called to preach Jesus. It may not be from a stage, there are four guys in my band that don't preach from a stage, but at no point are we too ashamed or afraid of offending people to remain silent about who we serve. Jesus is called the Rock of Offense and so if I were to ever call myself a Christian, if I were to ever say that I know Jesus or to take it a step further and say that I'm trying to live like Jesus lived, but I'm too afraid to offend people by speaking truth to them then I'm missing the mark. So, what it means to be a Christian band, what it means to be a Christian in general, is to reflect the nature of Jesus, which is sometimes offensive and is all the time, uncompromising."

For Today is striving for breakthrough. With their third album, *Breaker*, the band is anxiously seeking a nationwide revelation in the way Christians live, act, and are perceived. As a consistent and committed runner, Mike is happy to explain that drive the best way he knows how. "It's like the Roger Bannister story, the man who ran the first four-minute mile back in 1954. He ran the first four-minute mile ever recorded in history and then two months later someone broke his record. It's the idea that it had never been done, it was viewed as impossible, but a guy does it and then two months later someone was able to catch on and was able to have a part of this breakthrough and made the breakthrough corporate. It wasn't just one man, one time, a long time ago in history, it was something that happened and continued to happen until now, it's absolutely essential in Olympic running to run the 1600 in under four minutes.

"What was before this unobtainable dream is now the absolutely essential standard, that's kinda where a lot of stuff in Christian life is. Five years ago the standard was you go to church, you read your Bible, you don't say cuss words, you mouth along with worship songs and stuff like that and that would, for the most part, clear you up. But, we want the standard to be the people who can heal the sick, the people who set the captives free, the people who will cleanse all manner of disease, the people who move forward in the presence of God. We want that to be the standard for a Christian. If someone's like, 'oh, that person's a Christian, because they go to this church and read the Bible and memorize Bible verses,' we want it to move from that to be what Jesus actually said we would be set apart for. He said we would be set apart by our power, our authority and our love for one another. And that's something we really wanna see in our generation, this corporate thing, that this is not just this one dude at this one place, that this is a corporate thing that all believers everywhere would catch on to."

While they're consistently packing out shows and embarking on international tours, Ryan Leitru will quickly deflect any personal praise. "Anything that's special about For Today, anything that anyone looks up to or admires about us has very, very little to do with us and everything to do with how good God is in taking a bunch of kids who have a desire to tell people about him and a little bit of talent. We're out there to serve him; we're not out there to get glory for ourselves. We legitimately care about all the kids that come out to the show and we care about them because Jesus cares about them. Anything special that we have is not ours, all the glory is his. The only reason that anyone is even reading this article is because I feel like God wants to do something with us because we're willing, and that's all you have to be is willing."

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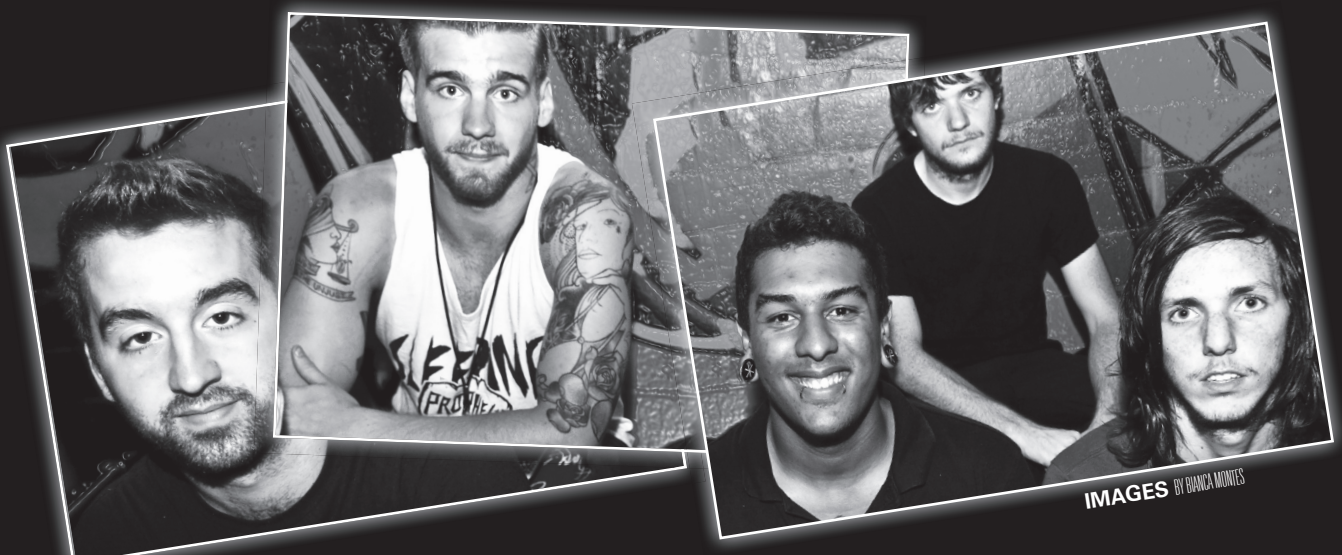

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What 3OH!3 Says

I REMEMBER BLUSHING A YEAR OR TWO AGO WHEN I POPPED THE DEBUT CD BY 3OH!3 INTO MY CAR STEREO ON THE WAY TO A FESTIVAL. BRASH, PROFANE AND SILLY LYRICS ARE SLAPPED ALL OVER BIG PHAT BEATS AND RIFFS. AFTER THE SERIOUSNESS OF A SLAYER INTERVIEW LAST ISSUE, CHOOSING 3OH!3 COULDN'T BE MORE OF AN EXTREME ALTERNATIVE. IT WAS A PLEASURE CATCHING CO-VOCALIST/FRONTMAN NAT MOTTE ON THE PHONE AFTER HE'D RETURNED FROM A STINT IN EUROPE AND VIDEO-MAKING AND TELEVISION APPEARANCES WHILE IN SOCAL. THEIR SINGLE, "MY FIRST KISS" WAS JUST CERTIFIED PLATINUM. AS YOU'D GUESS, THE INTERVIEW/CONVERSATION WITH A FORMER UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO MED STUDENT WENT A LITTLE BEYOND THE MUNDANE AND MUSICAL.

L-R: Nat Motte, Sean Foreman | Photo: Pamela Littky

You guys have done a great job of making music that's fun. Tell me how you can tell the difference between humor that's just too ridiculous vs. something that will work for you guys? (in the context of a song)

A good question, man. Uh, you know, I think we do and thank you for your comment, but I think ... it's something that it's like a line that we walked a lot and a line that we continue and will continue to walk. I think it's something that has been pretty polarizing in our music. I think, you know, like you said, I think we've always kind of had the distinction and it's one of those things in our music that, you know... We're having fun with our music, not making fun of the music, and I don't know … maybe that's something that distinguishes us from other acts. But I think that, you know ... I always thought laughing and poking fun of stuff was good and it was therapeutic. And, whether it be in movies or the books that I've read and stuff, I think there was always room for comedy and things... Even things that, you know, could be confused as sad. It's a lot of times easier to laugh at something that is sad and it's like one of the ways that you get over it, you know? And so I think that on our first album a lot of that – like angst about getting dumped by our girlfriends all the time was kinda laughed off by some of the sarcasm and some of the fun we were poking at girls on our album. And that was very therapeutic for us, you know. I mean, hopefully people see, you know, *that* as well when they listen to our music.

I bet there is a lot of commonality there, probably a lot of people ... I'm sure some don't but probably a lot of people click to it and probably get the same impact.

Yeah, I would hope so, man. I don't know, I think that in art a lot of people… I mean, I think there is room for very serious art – art that is in no way humorous. But I think with us we just wanted to make music that: A) is fun, you know, is catchy, and fun. And then B) hopefully is a little different and, you know, a little bit in congress and advances the scope of things that are out there right now. And you know, hopefully is relevant.

What are some examples of jokes or ideas that just fell flat on the cutting room floor, so to speak?

(laughs) I don't know, man. I mean, you know, when we were doing the Helen Keller line. That was real fun, but we were thinking of other things... There was like a Heath Ledger bang line, which was kind of (bleep) up. (laughs) More (bleep) up, I think than the Helen Keller thing, which was kind of removed and more passive, so we decided to nix that one, I think rightly so. I mean it's just, I don't know... Sean and I have a pretty dark sense of humor, you know? And I think we like the albums sometimes, though, that everyone else doesn't understand. But we are careful.

In what ways do you think music scenes are racist? How can music divide and/or unite different races?

I don't know. I don't really see music dividing races too much. It's cause, I guess, I don't listen to white supremacist rally music (laughs), you know? I really see music as being more uniting. I think, obviously the lyrical content of a song is paramount for that, but I think that, I don't know... I don't really draw those lines in the sense that I think why we created our music – was because we wanted to create music that you don't have to be from any particular scene, any particular economic up bringing or cultural or racial upbringing to appreciate our music – and that's like one of the things that we were reacting against. You know, we were very deep in an underground hiphop world that was very closed off. Only a certain type of people could like it and appreciate it. We were kind of making our own music. We were, like '(bleep) that! We just want to make music that everybody – no matter where they are from or who they are – can appreciate.' I think that's my mantra about music: Once it's out there it's out there. It's like: if you like it, you like it and if you don't, you don't – and that's kind of the beauty of putting art out.

I agree. Uh, I think it might be ... I guess it's definitely an ignorant statement (but) somebody might say, "Hey, you guys are white boys making black music." And so that's kinda why I wanted to ask that question to see what kind of feedback you've gotten along those realms and what you thought about that whole idea or concept.

No, I know what you mean. Yeah, I think that is a solid, valid point, you know – where white music is boring, at least in the rap sense. The art is, uh, a black art, but I think that, uh, you know? I mean, I don't know... I don't really think there is any harm in that and I think that, moreover, I think its cool when people do it in congress. I think its rad when you hear the hardest ever techno music coming from some weird place, like, you know, like Halifax, Nova Scotia, or something. I don't know. We just make the music that we know. It's like: A.) we make the music that comes naturally and that we know how to make. And then also it is music that we combine from the things that we listen to, and you know I listened to a (bleep) load of rap and hip-hop coming up, which was traditionally black music and stuff like that. But I, when I think of the grand scheme of things it is more on the former level, you know? You just make (bleep) that sounds cool to you and you don't necessarily think about whether its, like, black or white or, you know, or Hispanic or Asian music that you're making – you just make the music that comes to you.

Good for you, man. What are some examples of epic failure in your life in terms of asking girls out?

Uhh, you know what? Actually, I was at the backstage at a Katie Perry show and Rhianna was there and I was like hanging out, and I was like – finally, I was like – 'Alright, you know, I'm going to go talk to this girl,' like whatever. So I go up to her and I'm like, "Hey, I'm Nat from the band called 3OH!3. I'm a big fan." And she was super nice, she was like, "Hey yeah, I know you guys. I like you guys. I love your guy's stuff." And then some dude started talking to her and she was like, "Whoa, whoa! Can't you see I'm trying to hit on this dude?" That's, like, about me and I'm, like, '(bleep), that's awesome!' So I was getting hit on by Rhianna. So, then later in the night I got a little over-confidant and I went up to her at the after party and she was like resting her head on her friends shoulder and I was all drunk and I like go up and poke her and I'm like "Hey, wake up." And she's like, "I'm not sleeping." (laughs) So I look at her, then just drunkenly stumble away and just walk away. That was the last time I ever saw Rhianna.

How has your love life improved or worsened since the success of 3OH!3?

Ha! Well, it's certainly different. My whole life is different, cause we travel so much and, uh ... So, the idea of having a traditional relationship was kinda out the door – at least for now. But, actually, I just started seeing someone about a month ago, so it's … interesting, cause I didn't think I would be able to. But with this person I'm seeing is super busy as well and lives her life and does it in a way that, you know, we both really like each other and when we get to see each other it's awesome and then we're… So, it's ... by nature it has to be long distance, which is kind of (bleep) in some ways and in some ways it works out.

What do you think of Jesus Christ?

What do I think of the man, Jesus Christ?

Yeah.

I think if he existed he was probably a pretty cool dude, did some pretty cool stuff.

What do you think about His claims to be "the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?"

I think that's a pretty bold statement. Ummm. I would tend to be like, "Hey man, why don't you share the wealth?"

What are the biggest challenges you face during a live performance?

(chuckles) I think maybe the biggest challenge we ever had was uh, we were in Ventura, California, like, two years ago maybe like two and a half years ago and we were opening a show – actually it was three years ago – for Bone Thugs-n-Harmony, and we get there and there's a band on before us. We were going on right before Bone Thugs, but there was a band on before us that's from Ventura and they had to sell tickets to be on the show and they were getting booed for their entire set by fifteen hundred people. Like, flipping them off, throwing (bleep) on stage, booing them. You could barely even hear their music and so we were like, '(bleep), this is kinda (bleep).' And then right when they went off they were like, "Is everyone ready for Bone Thugs!?" and everyone goes crazy and then we had to go on after that. So, we decided to keep the set and the time in-between the songs as short as we possibly could, so we basically just went on and did our thing and they were like... We thought people were giving us thumbs up and then they kinda turned their hands around and it looked like a gun pointed at their heads so, uh (laughs), it was definitely a challenging show, but it was one of those... Yeah, we got done and kinda went off the stage and Krayzie Bone came up and said that he really likes our show, so it was a challenge, but it was fun.

Wow. What are some cues you use to find or ground yourself in the midst of a song if you get lost? Like, if someone put a bandage around your eyes and spun you around and just all of the sudden you opened your eyes and tried to figure out where you were?

It's funny, cause I think a lot of that – like finding yourself within a song – is pretty muscle memory after awhile. You don't necessarily... I don't usually necessarily have to think about lyrics, like, consciously. They kinda just come when their supposed to. And so, yeah, sometimes you do have to reign yourself in. You get carried away, you walk out too far into a crowd or you kinda get too carried, but ... I don't know, it helps having other people on stage. Like, nowadays we play with a band and there's five or six of us on stage, so we kinda look at everybody and see what they're doing and surround yourself, I guess.

I've got another type of combination question. What are your memories from the Columbine shootings way back when? And what are some thoughts you've come away with in the aftermath of all that?

I remember I was a freshman in highschool and I was on my way to lacrosse practice after school and I heard about it and ... I don't know, it was just kind of a... It was a shocking feeling. Like any of those events, it's like information comes real piece-wise, so it's hard to try to figure out what's true and what's, like, kind of panic speaking and stuff, but it was disheartening. It was really strange. I think that day was kinda a sad kind of slow day. I don't know. Since then, first and foremost I think the gun culture in the United States needs to change. I think we shouldn't be allowed to own recreational firearms. Also I think kids need to be nicer to each other. I wasn't clicky at all when I was in school. In retrospect I don't know if that was a conscious decision. I think it was more just, you know, I liked the people that I liked no matter if they were jocks or if they were skater people or, you know, nerds or whatever. I think that it's important to be that way and like people for who they are no matter what and not try to not put each other down and rather compliment each other. I think that's what I try to do in my life and I hope it's applicable to the way everybody treats it – that's all.

What was it like working with Andrew WK?

It was a lot of fun. It was amazing, yeah. We actually met him at a house party in the spring in Memphis and it was crazy. It was like a crazy house party. There was, like, pizzas all over this girl's pool and her dog was wearing sunglasses and (bleep) and then we met him. We've been a huge fan of his for a long time. I think that we can draw parallels with his music. It is a lot of fun. It's overtly fun, but at the same time it's cool. It's interesting music, so it was a pleasure to be able to work with an idol like that. He did a really cool remix of our song. We did one *Warped Tour* date this year in Ventura. And we were able to have him on our stage, so it was awesome. It was an honor.

Nice. How do you deal with and feel about animosity?

Um, I think it's a natural human emotion, you know? I think we all do it. I don't know. I think there's some cases where it's deserved, it's merited, but I don't know, man. I try to practice what I preach most of the time, but I think in generally people should just be nice to each other and, like I said – especially in an art realm – if you don't like a person's music or a person's art or anything like that, don't like it. You don't have to, like, vehemently be (bleep) to them because you don't like it. And that's the same in real life – if you don't like someone just don't talk to them, don't have anything to do with them and build your associations through positive contact rather than negative contact.

Good point, I think you kind of hit on it before when you kind of alluded to polarizing music and one example from some hatred from anti-fans is, I posted on my facebook: "Hey, I'm going to interview 3OH!3 in about 20 minutes. What should I ask?" And, uh, one person said, "Say hey from Pueblo," and another person said, "Nothing, do everyone a favor and cancel the interview."

Uh, I mean, that's their opinion, you know? That's good for them. They don't have to read your interview.

What do you think about Owl City?

Um, do you mean the new Postal Service CD that came out? (we both laugh) ...As I talk about not talking… But, I think, um, I don't personally like their music. I think that in that vein that there are other things that are better that came before, but I don't know. I mean I think that kids seem to like it and good for them. He's doing well with his music, so that's great for him.

I've been in your shoes before and I wondered if you particularly had a thought of, 'Man I hope this guy asks me a question about this' or 'I really hope I can talk about this today.' What's the topic that you would like to say something about?

What topic would I like to say something about? There's a lot of things, man. I'd like to talk about girl singers in the UK, some

new apple products I just bought. I'd like to talk about collective social memory and social guilt, we could talk about. I don't know. I think your questions are great. I think that they're interesting. They leave room for a great response and they allow for all that, so I'm good.

Cool. I'm curious about the collective guilt, if you want to elaborate on that a little bit, go for it. That'll be the last question.
I write essays sometimes and sometimes for a publication, but I think that in social history it's very easy to kinda pass off guilt for events and stuff onto your ancestors and not necessarily take it upon

"I think if he existed he was probably a pretty cool dude ... did some pretty cool stuff."

yourself, you know? And I think when things like the holocaust are discussed in Germany and Austria and even slave ownership in the United States. Like, I think that those are things which we can't ever forget and I think that a way in which you open the door for those things to happen again is to forget through being like, "Oh, you know, that was our great grandparents' generation that did that. That's not us." I think that's very dangerous and I think that, you know, instead of that I think people should feel a little bit of guilt in their society about those events, so it doesn't happen again, you know? I think that when the United States had slaves back in the 1860's, that's horrible and we shouldn't have done that and as a society we should be ashamed about that and we should do everything we can to make sure it never happens again. It's not a question of, you know, 'Those were those people back then and we're completely different now.' No, that's pretty recent…

Yeah, I was at a festival a couple weeks ago and I met these girls that were, uh, Christian girls and they were going to go after the festival to some Indian reservations in the Midwest and they were going to apologize, uh, you know, for the sins of the white man against their tribes and everything.
Wow.

And that kinda blew me away.
Yeah, that's pretty crazy. That's a … that's a interesting thing to do.

For sure, well thanks a lot for your time, Nat.
Alright man, thanks for calling.

You bet, man. I wish you the best and I hope to see you on the road sometime.
Alright, will do, man. Take care. Give us a shout when you're around.

Alright man, have a good weekend.
Alright, take care.

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Album reviews

47 ALBUMS 57 ENTERTAINMENT, BOOKS & GADGETS

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

ANBERLIN

DARK IS THE WAY, LIGHT IS A PLACE

Ever since reading the Anberlin feature in this issue, I anxiously awaited this "heavy" and "driven" direction they spoke of for the band's fifth album (and second for a major label). Turns out their definition of "more rock and less pop" is in need of a slap in the face. In fact, these 10 songs sound exactly like what you might expect from this same old band, which is actually really good news. Happy, snappy rhythms cascade up and down energetically while Stephen Christian's melodic voice crests the top of pretty much each and every song like thick cavity-inducing frosting. It's like dessert for the modern rocker at heart.

In terms of pure pop hooks, tunes like "Impossible" and "Take Me As You Found Me" could easily be transported back in time to a '50s sock hop if you just took out the alternate drum fills and slowed the tempo down drastically by cutting the bass to half-time and replacing the incessant down strokes with single, breathing open chords. Okay, maybe it wouldn't be that easy to transform them thusly, but the hooks of each chorus could swoon even the stiffest neck of a too-cool-to-dance male out onto the dance floor while girls in high heels sashayed and echoed each chorus. But I digress.

"You Belong To Me" starts off with a buildup that's part wind-up jewelry box and part lush movie score. "Pray Tell" begins with an almost stomp intro that sets the pace for a fairly fast journey. The biggest surprise might be "The Art of War," which has a pulsing electronic intro that comes on with the confidence of a U2 in their post-*Rattle & Hum* element. The opening track, "We Owe This to Ourselves," opens with an urgent beat and "To The Wolves" has traces of high, up-tempo energy, but they're certainly not a departure from aggressive tunes like "Blame Me! Blame Me!" or "Disappear." The acoustic intro to "Down" has elements that seem to tip its hand to "The Unwinding Cable Car" and the melodic progressions have a similar soothing feel. The last track, "Depraved," goes to that epic place that "Fin" and "Miserable…" took the listener to finish the last two albums. The song seems to act as the voice of the accuser, asking the question: "Are you depraved or are you deceived? Excuses aside, stop saying please. You're not a slave,

➡

so get off your knees!" Then the song turns to a dramatic crescendo from slow acoustic to an electric fast-paced ending, begging the question to clarify, "someone tell me I'm wrong." It's hard not to be impressed with this band, as they keep finding a way to deliver the goods even after they set the bar so high on *Never Take Friendship Personal*. It appears nothing can stop this band. And with tunes this good, who would want to? ~~[UNIVERSAL REPUBLIC] DOUG VAN PELT~~

CORPUS CHRISTI

A FEAST FOR CROWS

Although crows may not be interested in feasting on the latest offering of Cincinnati-based Corpus Christi, fans will surely devour the throat-shredding vocals of Max O'Connell, which lie perfectly across severe guitar riffs and bone-crushing bass and drum lines. While the 2009 debut release of *The Darker Shades of White* featured a limited range of potential, the recently purged band (leaving guitarist/vocalist Jarrod Christman) returns to the scene pushing their sound to the limit. Showcasing the band's ability to produce enormous amounts of sound, tracks such as "Monuments" and "Shepherd's in Sheep's Clothing" wreak havoc on the album and the slower and more melodic beats of "(Seeing You Again) for the First Time" display a more emotional side of CC. With perfectly blended vocals and screams accompanied by dominating guitars *A Feast for Crows* has no fillers and should satisfy any metal fan's appetite. ~~[VICTORY] BIANCA MONTES~~

THE SHOWDOWN

BLOOD IN THE GEARS

Blood in the Gears is biker metal that fires on every cylinder. Everything you need to know about *Blood in the Gears*, you learn in the album's first few minutes. Opener "The Man Named Hell" accelerates like a roadster in fifth gear, setting the tone for the nine tracks that follow. "Blood in the Gears" and "Bring it Down" have the meticulously calculated balance of boogie and breakdown that The Showdown are known for, while "Take Me Home" shifts down for a Skynyrd-esque Southern ballad. *Blood in the Gears* has an oddly appropriate balance of Skynyrd, Bon Jovi, Metallica, Slipknot and He Is Legend – depending on when you jump into the album. Regardless of what side of the Mason-Dixon you find yourself, this album is perfect for biker rallies and speeding down country roads. ~~[SOLID STATE] NATHAN DOYLE~~

TRUE LIBERTY

CITY OF THE ONE

True Liberty makes no attempts to hide who they are. Featuring 12 tracks that clock in at just over 28 minutes, *City of the One* is as straight-up punk rock as you can get. The album has the speed and grit you expect from any real punk album and maintains a quality production that keeps the guitars grungy while the bass bleeds through and drums pop. The biggest downfall of *City of the One* is its rich circle pit riffs blend together so much that it makes identifying individual songs difficult. ~~[WOUNDED] NATHAN DOYLE~~

DISCIPLE

HORSESHOES AND HAND GRENADES

In the last half-decade, Disciple has taken every opportunity to expand their rock and roll palette. From the melodic rock sound that dominated their '05 self-titled to the obvious Southern flavors on '08's *Southern Hospitality* and the screaming in between ('06's *Scars Remain*), it's become a bit challenging to predict where the Knoxville act might turn next. The answer is here with *Horseshoes and Hand Grenades* – an amalgam of everything that has come before. And the results will either satisfy longtime fans to have a cohesive album that brings it all together or frustrate those fans who wish the five-piece would find one thing and do it well. "Dear X" intrigues from the first string-laden notes with Kevin Young's emotional vocal declaring an anthem of breaking free. Young sings to characters like "hate" or "anger" or "shame" words like the following: "Go ahead / You're never gonna take me / I was yours / I'm not yours anymore / You don't own me." It's a strong melodic construct that rivals some of the band's best arena-ready rock songs and should make quite a run at rock radio. In addition, "Watch It Burn" cranks the amps to 11 and becomes a fist-pumping, Southern-tinged barn-burner. "Augustine" rides militaristic drums into a Bullet for My Valentine mix that sears and boils over near the track's end. Any Disciple album wouldn't be complete without an impressive ballad or two and album closer "Worth the Pain" definitely fits the bill here. The piano-driven tune builds until all parties join in to properly close the proceedings. The palette is fairly expansive here, so it's hard to tell whether audiences will enjoy the full 12-course meal, but there's something here to enjoy for everyone. ~~[INO] MATT CONNER~~

12 STONES

THE ONLY EASY DAY WAS YESTERDAY

Post-grunge band 12 Stones plays it safe on its new EP. Despite its technical proficiency, the Louisiana-bred quintet has always been difficult to distinguish from the current crop of mainstream rock artists, namely Chevelle, Trapt and Evans Blue. Unfortunately, the songs on *The Only Easy Day Was Yesterday* do little to help the band break away from the pack. Opener "Welcome to the End" is textbook radio-rock – Eric Weaver and Justin Rimer's muscular minor-key riffs churn beneath Paul McCoy's arena-ready sing-along chorus. Likewise, every measure on the rest of the disc seems to be tailored for maximum airwave exposure. That said, it's not a bad extended-play. 12 Stones have a capable frontman in McCoy, and he injects the five tracks here with catchy melodies. No doubt the band will license the whole album out to blockbuster action flicks and extreme sports broadcasts. ~~[WIND-UP] JEFF SISTRUNK~~

THE AFTERS

LIGHT UP THE SKY:

Following the success of the 2008 release *Never Going Back to OK*, Dallas-based The Afters had a lot to live up to with their fourth studio album, *Light Up the Sky*. While The Afters could simply continue to produce music that has landed them two GMAs and one of the most-played songs on Christian CHR radio in 2008, the band has taken their sound to the next level. From the anthem-inspired chorus of "Light Up the Sky," to the clean and innocent vocals of "I Am Yours," this album sets your heart on fire. ~~[INO] BIANCA MONTES~~

FUTURE OF FORESTRY

TRAVEL III

Future of Forestry's Eric Owyoung has grand aspirations – it seems like every decision he makes during writing and recording is designed to maximize comparisons to epic heavyweights such as U2. Owyoung's penchant for auditory grandeur continues on *Travel III*, the final installment in a trilogy of EPs. Like the songs on its predecessors, everything here is awash in spacey textures. Chunky, Audioslave-ish riffage provides the backbone for the opener, "Bold and Underlined," but the song quickly transitions into reverb-heavy verses and choruses. Meanwhile, the orchestral refrains on "Working to Be Loved" and "Did You Lose Yourself" are clearly informed by Sigur Ros' deep-space hymns. Throughout the EP, the deployment of glitched-out electronic loops recalls Radiohead's production on *In Rainbows*. Ultimately, the myriad comparisons hinder the record instead of helping it. The listener is more likely to think about the legendary bands Future of Forestry invokes than the material itself, and the gorgeous sonics can't overshadow the mediocre songwriting. ~~[CREDENTIAL] JEFF SISTRUNK~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Anberlin *Dark is the Way, Light is a Place*	04	
Corpus Christi *A Feast for Crows*	03	04
The Showdown *Blood in the Gears*	04	04
True Liberty *City of the One*	03	03*
Disciple *Horseshoes and Hand Grenades*	03*	03
12 Stones *The Only Easy Day Was Yesterday*	03	03
The Afters *Take Care of Me*	03	03*
Future of Forestry *Travel III*	04	03*
The Choir *Burning Like the Midnight Sun*	04	03
Ivoryline *Vessels*	04	03
Starflyer 59 *Changing of the Guard*	04	03*
Runaway City *Armored Heart*	03	02
Newsboys *Born Again*	03	03
In The Midst of Lions *The Heart of Man*	03*	04
Men as Trees Walking *1518*	03*	03
For Today *Breaker*	04	04
The Devil Wears Prada *Zombie EP*	04	04

THE CHOIR
BURNING LIKE THE MIDNIGHT SUN

12 studio long-players in a quarter century. The legacy of The Choir stands taller than most anything connected with the Christian music scene. Yet, with their latest release, the familiar faces of Derri Daugherty, Steve Hindalong, Tim Chandler, Marc Byrd and Dan Michaels reveal a creative impulse as vibrant as ever. "That Melancholy Ghost" aptly introduces not only the music within the second track, but the entire album could exist under the same moniker. Daugherty's tender tenor effortlessly maneuvers the quintet through the mostly ambient environment created by Byrd's familiar guitar tones. Sometimes dirty, sometimes light and ethereal, Byrd's textures always properly set the stage. The structure provided by Chandler and Hindalong on bass and drums respectively is steady throughout, but the real gem to discover is Michaels' saxophone work. Not only does the mix strongly support his efforts, but it surprisingly fits into every track – a feat unto itself. "Midnight Sun" and the aforementioned "That Melancholy Ghost" borrow older Brit-rock guitar progressions to carry them. "Between Bare Trees" features a beautiful acoustic/electric combination, and Daugherty's vocal is pitch-perfect. The straightforward rock delivery of "Invisible" amps up the proceedings near album's end. Each of *Burning*'s 11 tunes features a polite mix, where each member almost seems reticent to steal the spotlight. The results are always pleasant, each song a cohesive ambient rock mix, yet there are moments where you wish someone would steal the spotlight and challenge the status quo. Even still, fans of The Choir will be glad to finally have another solid LP in the catalog after waiting several years. ~~[GALAXY 21] MATT CONNER~~

IVORYLINE
VESSELS

On their sophomore release Ivoryline took some huge risks. Shifting between scene-friendly rock songs a la Saosin or Emarosa, pretty pop songs (think Anberlin) and borderline cheesy contemporary tracks that beg to be played by a youth pastor on a Wednesday night, the hodgepodge of inputs pulls the listener in three different directions. While all three genres are not bad on their own, the combination of influences is awfully confusing. In the process of trying to challenge themselves to write a hopeful and earnest album, Ivoryline instead tried a little too hard to be real. *Vessels* is wonderfully catchy; at its better moments, "The Healing" and "Vessels" both soar. But the remaining 11 tracks seem to lack that focus. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] NATHAN DOYLE~~

STARFLYER 59
CHANGING OF THE GUARD

Over the years, Jason Martin's voice has deepened significantly, which gives him more vocal authority than he had when performing earlier, wispier-sung songs. In fact, he sounds a little like a cowboy singer on one titled "Shane," which is actually a famous 1953 Western film title. In it, Shane is described as a character that always seems to come to the rescue. (This could be Martin's sneaky little way of talking about God). Martin has also evolved into a pop purest over the years. Gone are those fuzzy, shoegazer workouts; in their place are beautifully strummed songs, which are assembled with pristine production. Who'd have ever expected to hear Martin sing something like "Youth is wasted on the young," as he does during "I Had a Song for the Ages"? But Martin is singing with the voice of experience now, and also making some of the best music of his life. So don't change that guard quite yet. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

RUNAWAY CITY
ARMORED HEART

Attempting to deliver an edgier tone to a contemporary message, North Carolina-based Runaway City falls flat on their debut offering. Intending for listeners to find refuge in their confessional lyrics, the band manages to deliver an overpowering message of optimism and a serious lack of creativity. While Runaway City steps out of their repetitive formula in the honestly refreshing "Longing," nothing else stands out on this album, it is the same catchy hook over and over. Drawing inspiration from artists such as Daughtry is not a step in the wrong direction; however, I should not be left remembering the only season of *American Idol* I will admit to watching. ~~[VERTUSENT] BIANCA MONTES~~

NEWSBOYS
BORN AGAIN

After 24 years in the business and 13 studio albums, immortal Christian pop staples the Newsboys return with another album for the teen Sunday school crowd. *Born Again* is the 'Boys first album with former dcTalk member Michael Tait, who replaced longtime vocalist Peter Furler. As always, the band is most comfortable when navigating "future worship-set ballad" territory. "Build Us Back" boasts a massive chorus, while the synth-laden "Impossible" is a heartfelt love letter to God. The faster-paced tracks are hit-or-miss: "Miracles" is fueled by a loping, Muse-esque groove, while "When the Boys Light Up" is an embarrassing foray into rap-rock. It's a testament to the Newsboys' creative deficiencies that they chose to close out the album with a pair of covers: a passionate version of "Mighty to Save" and an inexplicable redux of dcTalk's breakthrough "Jesus Freak." All told, *Born Again* is about as lukewarm as you can get – it's far from terrible, but there's nothing remarkable here. ~~[INPOP] JEFF SISTRUNK~~

IN THE MIDST OF LIONS
THE HEART OF MAN

The Heart of Man is a slow storm. Ominous and imposing, In the Midst of Lions' second full-length album takes its time, allowing the tension to build and melodies to circle until the defining moments strike, and strike they do. While the first two-thirds of the album feel like any other heavy album – booming breakdowns, technical sweeps and a production job that makes *The Heart of Man* sound absolutely huge – the final five songs really bring the focus that a metal album needs to stand out. "Defiance" features guest vocals from Levi Macallister, which gives one of the album's best songs an Aaron Weiss (on "Memphis Will Be Laid to Waste") feel, something that isn't replicated nearly enough. "Fearless" helps build that dynamic with a crashing, "I am not afraid to die" chorus. When *The Heart of Man* hits, there is a beautiful destruction left over, but the rain could have come a little sooner. ~~[FACEDOWN] NATHAN DOYLE~~

MEN AS TREES WALKING
1518

Capturing a beautiful emotional range of sound, Dallas-based prophetic worship band Men As Trees Walking bring an entirely new sound to modern worship. From the Celtic opener "There's a Sound" to the reggae-influenced "Song of Moses," MATW define the meaning of eclectic on their release of *1518*. ~~[COME&LIVE] BIANCA MONTES~~

FOR TODAY
BREAKER

There was a transcendent moment on the Houston stop of the 2010 *Scream the Prayer Tour* when For Today frontman Mattie Montgomery stood like a statue on the edge of the stage, intently surveying his audience while strobe lights flashed behind him. Then, seconds later, both he and the crowd erupted into furious movement as the band tore into the punishing breakdown of "Devastator," the first single off For Today's new album. Although Montgomery's intimidating stage presence isn't visible on *Breaker*, his commanding growl propels these uncompromising songs forward. From a lyrical standpoint, the album is a call to arms for believers to fight the status quo. Most of Montgomery's lyrics take the form of imperatives. "Take your flame and guide the world!" he shouts on "Seraphim." The rest of the band is equally on point. Guitarists Ryan Leitru and Mike Reynolds inject cuts like "Psalm of the Son" with head-spinning runs that would make Killswitch Engage jealous, and drummer David Morrison is punishing. However, many of the breakdowns are borderline indistinguishable and seem overly reliant on the same sludgy guitar tones. For the most part, this is excused by the strong songwriting. In an interesting twist, For Today invited slam poet, Jose Palos to throw down on four down-tempo numbers that are scattered throughout the album. The last of these, album closer "The Breakers: Commission," builds into a worship-ready refrain that recalls "Talmidim: The Servants" from *Portraits*. It's this kind of versatility that separates For Today from the pack. *Breaker* is a powerful statement from a band with its eye on the kingdom of God. ~~[FACEDOWN] JEFF SISTRUNK~~

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA
ZOMBIE EP

The Devil Wears Prada's recent journey into the wildly popular lore of George Romero and Max Brooks is more *28 Days Later* than *Night of the Living Dead*. *Zombie* is fast, wildly creative (a bass drop built from a shotgun blast) and infectious. TDWP had one thing in mind with this five-song EP, to have fun and splatter the brains of the undead, and they drill it like a sniper from 200 yards. I've found my soundtrack for the impending apocalypse. ~~[FERRET] NATHAN DOYLE~~

DEUS INVICTUS
STAGED IN AWAITING

Technically savvy and meticulously infused metal lifts Deus Invictus to the top of the current crop of metal discs. Extremely intricate with some monumental musical passages, *Staged in Awaiting* is the real deal. Strong elements of jazz fusion, progressive and death metal coupled with subtle musical passages allow a large supply of melody to manifest itself. Deus Invictus have created something unique to these ears. Drummer Jeff Carter (formerly of The Chariot) has assembled a band with an extremely divergent sound. Jeff has stated that some of influences extend to prog rockers, Yes, and Scandinavian act, Amorphis. One of the best aspects of this release is the production, which allows the music to breathe and grow. Its precision is only matched by its maturity. *Staged in Awaiting* is a metal album that demands a listen and proves its worth by the quality of the art within, lyrically and musically. ~~[BOMBWORKS] KEVEN CROTHERS~~

RICK ALTIZER
I WANT MINE

Rick Altizer's career could be a dramedy unto itself. And, the acoustic troubadour apparently placed much of his own story inside of his latest protagonist, Sam. *I Want Mine*. Altizer's new concept album tells of the rise and fall of a selfish rock star, but the material fails to live up to the promising premise as it unfolds. Unfortunately, the rise of Sam is never realized and the fall comes way too quickly. ~~[FUSEIC MUSIC] MATT CONNER~~

HALF-HANDED CLOUD
STOWAWAYS

For the compactness of John Ringhofer's songs, he sure packs ideas galore into Half-handed Cloud. On his fifth long-player, the title of which will be henceforth abbreviated to *Stowaways*, his short attention span surveys almost every biblical reference to water for another of his textually and theologically dense, disjointedly sing-song ventures into friendly sonic whiplash. Aside from his gentle tenor, sounding like the missing cousin shared by Sufjan Stevens and Beavis and Butt-head teacher Mr. Van Driessen, the fills and textures off of the songs make for a great part of the fun. Within his freaky folk-pop Ringhofer jams in surf guitar here, lo-fi industrial loops there and drum breaks that could fit on a metal record if only they were recorded with more oomph. The abundance of thought and creativity get hampered by melodies that become a tad "samey" by the album's end. It's tempting to think that Ringhofer may have used some of the same tunes for a portion of preceding double-CD set of rarities and compilation cuts. It you already enjoy HhC, here's more of what you already like. If you're curious, this is as fine a place to dive in as any. ~~[ASTHMATIC KITTY] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

THE WRECKING
THE CATALYST EP

Chock-full of safe, easygoing, cute Christian rock songs, *The Catalyst*, the latest EP from pop-rock quartet The Wrecking, would be perfect for Air1 or any other praise and worship radio station. "Breathe," *Catalyst*'s opening track, starts with a simple acoustic guitar riff and uncomplicated vocals. The chorus is more enthusiastic, but it doesn't reach a level that's surprising or exciting. One of the more memorable songs on the record, "About to Fall," is led by a slow-paced endearing guitar riff, uplifting lyrics about how everyone is broken and in need of help and vocals that anyone could sing along with. There's nothing to hate about The Wrecking, but there isn't anything that makes them stand out. Listening to *The Catalyst* is like ordering a cheese pizza; it's plain and boring. The bottom line is there's nothing about *The Catalyst* that makes me want to listen. ~~[CHOSEN] ERIC HOFFMAN~~

ROBERT RANDOLPH AND THE FAMILY BAND
WE WALK THIS ROAD

The editor and publisher of the magazine you're reading had good reason to include a live Robert Randolph and the Family Band album amongst his recent list of top 100 Christian rock albums of all time. The steel guitar virtuoso and his gang has yet to capture the same kind of excitement in the studio that they do in concert (and church). *We Walk This Road* doesn't quite accomplish that tall order either, but thanks to producer T Bone Burnett, who knows a few things about infusing Christianity into the modern roots which Randolph orbits, other priorities take precedence in making this album the best of the act's studio sets thus far. The excitement Randolph and his kin generate here electrifies, per their more audience-interactive settings. Burnett has given them a vision to reflect African-American music over the past century, hence the snippets of old 78s placed on the album. With originals and remakes from an assortment of writers running a gamut, such as Bob Dylan and Tonio K to Prince and John Lennon, Burnett brings out of his charges an organic suffusion of styles that doesn't sound nearly as forced as the more strained moments on the group's last two studio sets. Randolph and the Fam' Band have created a collection that should merit play on soul gospel and CCM radio, as well as general market rock and pop outlets. It would be a small matter of justice, but one worthy of Randolph's and Burnett's expansive aesthetic. ~~[WARNER BROTHERS] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

RODENT EMPORIUM
SUMMER SUN EP

Clocking in at just over 12 minutes, the *Summer Sun* EP is very appropriately named. Just like the best months of the year, these songs are bright, enjoyable and utterly hilarious at times, all while ending far too soon. I certainly appreciate Rodent Emporium's cow-punk diversity on this disc, almost as much as I appreciate their sense of humor. At points during the recording the band loses their composure and starts cracking up, which in turn allows the listener to crack a smile and enjoy themselves. ~~[RAGING STORM] NATHAN DOYLE~~

LS UNDERGROUND
PTSD

When Michael Knott sings, "All my loved ones don't love me anymore," with an extremely weary voice during "Lights Out," it's a familiar sonic. Via L.S. Underground, Knott has always vacillated between self-pity and anger, and in this instance, he begs for understanding during the verses, then lashes out on the chorus. Knott is Christian music's equivalent to a shock jock, as his songs are oftentimes more about eliciting a reaction than anything else. He shows off that well-developed guttural scream during "Never Gonna Come Back." Yet, he's probably underrated for his softer side, which is expressed beautifully during the acoustic strains of "A Shade of Pain," which is, perhaps, a pun on LSU's classic *Shaded Pain* release. This mostly noisy new CD proves Knott's still got it. He's old enough to be Cornerstone newbies' grandfather, but he still sounds right at home creating loud, alternative rock. ~~[BLONDE VINYL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

CORIOLIS
THE ENDLESS FUNERAL

For an album named *The Endless Funeral*, Coriolis' new LP sure is drenched in hope. The title, coupled with the cover image of the Grim Reaper, suggests a misanthropic black metal release. However, while Coriolis' Jonathan Stamets definitely has some issues to work out here, even his angriest songs are ultimately optimistic. The overall sound of the disc is scarcely black – it's more industrial-lite. Some tracks even approach synth-pop territory, particularly the endearingly catchy opener, "Welcome to My World (Part 1)." That's not an insult – *The Endless Funeral* is at its best when the tempo stays up. It's when the band delves into slower material, as on the grunge-inflected ballad "Lie," that the album drags. Stamets' baritone is sure to be a point of division among listeners. While gravelly, monotonous vocals are commonplace within the genre, Stamets' dispassionate performance is disconcerting. So, while the album is generally solid, it's hard to get worked up about. ~~[YOUNGSIDE] JEFF SISTRUNK~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Rick Altizer *I Want Mine*	03	02
Half-Handed Cloud *Stowaways*	03	03
The Wrecking *The Catalyst*	03	02*
Robert Randolph *We Walk this Road*	04	04
Rodent Emporium *Summer Sun EP*	03	03*
LS Underground *PTSD*	02*	03
Coriolis *The Endless Funeral*	03	03
Discover America *Future Paths*	02*	
Pomegranates *Everything is Alive*	04	
Adiastasia *Life Way*	03*	03
U2 *360° at the Rose Bowl* (DVD)	04	
John Mark McMillan *The Medicine*	04	04*
Lost Dogs *Old Angel*	03	03
Wovenhand *The Thressing Floor*	04	04
The Museum *Let Love Win*	03	02
Bradley Hathaway *A Thousand Angry Panthers*	03*	
Knights of the New Crusade *Knight Vision*	02	04

DISCOVER AMERICA
FUTURE PATHS

Bono said it best when he expressed interest in "only music from artists running away from God or towards Him." Not sure if former twothirtyeight frontman Chris Staples is a believer (with lines like "…but I painted quite a picture / way back when I was a believer" from "A Lock of Samson's Hair" or "…it's damn near impossible / to believe in anything" from "Time is a Bird"), but it's certainly engaging and entertaining. This Broken Circles vinyl re-release brings life from the supposed digital recordings of these organic-sounding instruments (light brushes on drums, strumming guitars and minimalist sounds). The great riff and hook of "Out of the Valley" almost feels like a '70s classic rock radio single with the breathing sonics. [BROKEN CIRCLES/LUJO] DOUG VAN PELT

POMEGRANATES
EVERYTHING IS ALIVE

The chiming, atmospheric guitars a la Explosions in the Sky abound here, as do lots of percussion – a perfect context for the sonic bandwidth of vinyl. This and the expanded artwork are primo. [BROKEN CIRCLES/LUJO] DOUG VAN PELT

ADIASTASIA
LIFE WAR

Featured last year in our "All Brazil Metal" issue of *Heaven's Metal* fanzine, this talented band's debut – previously released in '06 – has been nicely remastered and repackaged. The Euro power/prog sounds of Stratovarius immediately come to mind – classically tinged, keyboard-accentuated, melodic power metal with plenty of speed. And while these guys have not yet obtained that stature (or of fellow countrymen Angra for that matter) there is a tremendous amount of potential energy here just waiting to be unleashed. Vocalist Jeff Winner nails the high notes in operatic fashion, setting the clearly Christ-centric lyrics on fire. And the mostly uptempo – sometimes galloping-like-Maiden – rhythms and leads are catchy and well-crafted. This might not turn many heads in the modern metal scene, but these South Americans might just lead the next Jesus metal revolution. [BOMBWORKS] JONATHAN SWANK

U2
360° AT THE ROSE BOWL (DVD)

It's the perfect commemorative tour program. If you were able to behold this spectacle in the past year, this'll be your audio/visual reminder of how awesome it was. There's a great selection of spread photos in the two-disc packaging. The visuals are outstanding and the mix is booming in DTS and Dolby Surround. Powerful moments abound, like the shout-out to Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma to the segue from "Amazing Grace" to "Where the Streets Have No Name." Then you can pop in the bonus disc and discover how this monstrosity was conceived and built. And here I was thinking it'd all be anti-climactic after having seen the show and the youtube telecast. Boy, was I wrong! [UNIVERSAL/ISLAND] DOUG VAN PELT

JOHN MARK MCMILLAN
THE MEDICINE

John Mark McMillan is one of this generation's great musical voices. After three independent releases, McMillan signed with Integrity Music earlier this year and re-released his 2008 album, *The Medicine*, including four new tracks. Breakout single "How He Loves," which is currently being covered by industry staples such as David Crowder Band, Kim Walker, Todd Agnew and Flyleaf, makes a re-appearance on the album. Bruce Springsteen, Pete Yorn, Band of Horses and Hank Williams Sr. are a few influences you can hear on *The Medicine* especially in "Reckoning Day," "Carbon Ribs," "Death in His Grave" and "Philadelphia." If Bruce Springsteen sang about what it was like to be a hard-working American, John Mark sings about the relationship that we have with God. John Mark has written some of the greatest songs about love, hope and faith that I have ever heard. ~~[INTEGRITY] ROB SHAMELESS~~

LOST DOGS
OLD ANGEL

With *Old Angel*, the Lost Dogs have created the ultimate Americana album – one that explores the U.S. migration between Oklahoma and California, in response to the Dust Bowl storms that turned many Americans into nomads during the '30s. Terry Taylor draws a handy Old Testament biblical parallel with the disc's opener, "Israelites and Okies," when the group sings, "I'm with Israelites and Okies escapin' 'cross the desert sand / driven by the lash of providence towards the mine fields of the Promised Land." These songs are part Route 66 and part John Steinbeck travelogue. "Dust in My Bowl" pleads for God's mercy, while "Dead End Diner" finds humor in some of the unique stops along the Route 66 cross-country route. ~~[FOOLS OF THE WORLD] DAN MACINTOSH~~

WOVENHAND
THE THRESHING FLOOR

David Eugene Edwards exists in a unique musical category all his own. No other artist manages to wear his Christianity on his sleeve while maintaining an artistic integrity that is so above reproach even the most jaded critics in the secular media rave about his songwriting, lyrics and music. From his previous alt-country band 16 Horsepower to the seven stunning records he's recorded with Wovenhand, there is a one-of-a-kind combination of dark themes, Pentecostal influences and even murder ballads. *The Threshing Floor* takes what fans have come to love from Wovenhand and stretches the prog-folk sound a step further by infusing even more world influences. The opening track "Sinking Hands" is a mesmerizing mix of electronica, Native American, eastern and neofolk. From there the lyrics get darker – jumping from the Old Testament to Revelation with visions of darkness – and the music moves in and out of light on an eclectic path that leads to a place no other album can take you. Wovenhand and 16 Horsepower fans already know about this fantastic journey and there is plenty of room for more, but come with an open mind about music and art. ~~[SOUNDS FAMILYRE] TONY SHORE~~

THE MUSEUM
LET LOVE WIN

After reading through *Let Love Win*'s track listing you will know everything there is to know about this album. It is nearly 40 minutes of contemporary Christian music in the same vein as Chris Tomlin, Hillsong United or Jeremy Camp, only not as engaging. There's a definite requirement for cheesy, cheap lyrics that are expected to translate into worship in the CCM world and The Museum fit that requirement to a "T." While there isn't necessarily anything wrong with Christians writing music for Christians, it becomes problematic when every artist can be exchanged for another. *Let Love Win* is most at home at college ministries who have no desire to reach a secular population. ~~[BEC] NATHAN DOYLE~~

BRADLEY HATHAWAY
A THOUSAND ANGRY PANTHERS

The instrumentation (which is quite fantastic) behind Hathaway's voice is perfectly suited for the guy's almost falsetto crooning. The viola, banjo, mandolin, piano, soft drumming acoustic and chiming electric guitar all fit like a glove with his story-telling songs. Blending early folk/Americana with stories of pain, heartache and hope the poet-turned-singer keeps the quality of his music raised high on this four-song EP. "The World is Screaming" is a standout cut that is currently (and probably will remain) a mainstay in his live set, which keeps building with painful life description upon painful line until the title/chorus line starts infinite repeat and the instruments build the intensity and speed with a loud crescendo (including nice "oh-oh" BGVs) that concludes with the divine hope in the line: "…but you can't tell me that nobody is listening." Like the Negro spiritual of old, it's powerful and redemptive. ~~[YOU ARE A SNOWFLAKE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

KNIGHTS OF THE NEW CRUSADE
KNIGHT VISION

Christendom's most prominent rock & roll-playing wearers of chainmail, Knights of the New Crusade will polarize audiences with their third LP. Lovers of '60s garage punk and sonically scuzzy psychedelia should be encouraged that the Knights continue to progress within a style whose parameters are generally bound by the Nuggets box sets and the Estrus and Norton Records catalogs. Spooky kazoos approximating the horror of Hell, a two-channel dual vocal akin to a certain Velvet Underground dusty and a whirling fest of feedback and minor key guitar soloing over a galloping Middle Eastern beat number among the Knights' innovations. Some won't, however, get beyond the band's confrontational visuals (like grimacing, corpse-painted metallurgists singing in a perpetual growl about the Almighty aren't intimidating either?!), musical primitivism that's really becoming deceptively agile and the bluntness of their lyrical and vocal attacks. And if the group is, as some allege, a joke, it's an oddly articulate and astute one. There are, arguably, bigger jokes with Christian book publishing contracts. The sum of the Knights' parts might not make every godly rocker giddy with glee, but it's fair to say that they have a manner which will go over with listeners for whom many other Christocentric bands won't. Oh, and guts. They have those to spare. ~~[ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Twenty-Fourth)

We've been exploring in this series answers as to why millions of Evangelical Americans have produced so few examples of quality art in any artistic category, seeing that this is largely due to limited (and/or distorted) views of Biblical teaching (or a failure to act on the implications of its teachings), despite the fact that Holy Writ instructs Christians in "every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17), which works of necessity includes the making of art.

We looked at the negative effects of such theologically deficient perspectives on the doctrines of Creation and Eschatology, which result in denigrations of the physical world and time as appropriate theaters of God's Purposes, encouraging pessimism concerning history, and viewing the world as Satan's realm, which needs only to be escaped from rather than redeemed and fulfilled.

We saw also that sub-Biblical views on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity led to a destruction of Scriptural justification of symbol as simultaneously showing forth both multiple meanings and unified meaning. Such views lead as well to the reduction of men from the mysterious bearers of God's Image to simplistic machines amenable to quick-fix formulae.

We then turned to look at the implications of the Incarnation of Christ, in which God, in the Second Person of the Trinity, joined Himself to a fully Human Nature and Body so that He could be the Perfect Sacrifice to atone for the sins of mankind by dying in fallen humanity's place. This Eternal Joining of God to Man in Christ Jesus is summed up by the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) when it wrote that He is "at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood. Truly God and truly Man…"

In the last article, we saw that many Evangelicals hold a view of the Incarnation which mirrors the basic thrust of the heresy known as Nestorianism, which views Christ's Humanity as only peripheral to His Divinity, and as, at best, only something to be tolerated, at worst as an irrelevance to His Person and Mission. In other words, though it is to be admitted that He is also a Man, He is really to be thought of as God, not as Man. This imbalanced view of Christ Jesus, which emphasizes His Divinity and ignores His Humanity, results in a devaluation of the human as a sphere of spirituality and an arena of God's Purposes.

An example of this aberrance in view of the Incarnation can be seen in a consideration of Luke 2:40: "And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him," and at verse 52 of the same chapter: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

Scripture here plainly teaches that Jesus grew physically, and in spirit, wisdom, grace, favor and stature. If Jesus' Humanity (Which must be what the Bible is intending here, since Jesus was already as full of grace, favor and wisdom as He could be in His Divinity, having always been so as God) is indeed co-inherent with His Divine Nature in comprising His One Person ("One Person in Two Natures" as the Chalcedonian Definition tells us), if His Humanity is as vital to His One Person as His Divinity is in the Constitution of His Person, then the fact that He grew in His Humanity is stupendously important in its implications for humanity, the world and art.

How? Because if Jesus' Humanity is as vital to His Existence as the Incarnate Redeemer as is His Divinity, then the growth of His Humanity in its various aspects is also vital to His Mission as the Second Adam (cf. 1 Cor. 15). Hebrews 5:8-9 tells us that Christ in His Humanity perfectly learned obedience and thus became perfectly prepared and suited to be the Sinless Sacrifice for humanity. Jesus thus, as a Human, had to undergo a process of preparation and growth (which, as an Unfallen Man, He did perfectly) to achieve His Mission on earth.

It was His Humanity Which was offered for the sins of men, and that Humanity was both joined to His Unchanging Divine Nature and underwent growth to accomplish the goal intended by God. This means that human growth in time is important to God's Purposes, and that it is proper and necessary for men to change and grow as part of God's Plan.

Rather than some unrealistic, static, idealistic concept of humanity, artists are to depict men as they actually are, creatures intended to grow and change as they move toward sanctification, thus showing such change as a vital part of man's spiritual existence. This allows the artist (in whatever media) to depict men as deeper and more complex (and thus as more believable and real) creatures in a world where time and change not only happen, but are intended to happen, the change (for good or ill) being fraught with numinous meaning.

A deficient view of the Incarnation throws suspicion on change and time as vehicles for spiritual content, and thus on men as real loci for God's Grace. Don't hold such a view. Your art (and your faith) will suffer for it.

[kempercrabb.net]

Guest editorial by Josh Scogin

"What advice would you give a young band trying to get started in this day and age?" This is a deeply rooted question that I get asked quite often. It has many long roads that I should travel down to give a complete answer, but unfortunately, I will not even be able to scratch the surface in this brief article. However, I would like to address a couple things.

Forget about the money and focus on the music. If the sole reason for being in a band is the "riches," then my advice would be to quit now and do ANYTHING else. I am fully confident that making money (substantial amounts of money) is easier with almost any other profession. This can be hard to swallow since MTV-fueled "success stories" are constantly shoved down our throats day in and day out. It can easily be forgotten that for every one "success story," there are hundreds of thousands of musicians/bands whose name you have never even heard. Let me clarify, I am NOT necessarily saying that being in a band equals eternal debt. I am only saying that money should not be the MAIN focus in the beginning (or ever). I am also, NOT saying, that every band with loads of money has "sold out." Even though it is true that some artists water down their art and/or sacrifice their sound in an attempt to make the mainstream "heavy rotation" lists, it is unfair (and untrue) to say that ALL "success stories" have compromised. I have seen plenty of bands stand their ground as artists and yet, somehow, get invited into the world of popular mainstream music. As a lover of good music, I am absolutely ecstatic when a band I like is able to pay their bills comfortably. This gives them the ability to keep writing great records. The truth is, that if your band has any stretch of longevity, there will inevitably come a time when you will be forced to deal with the complex idiosyncrasies of the business side of rock and roll; but for now, spend your time and energy on your music and your craft. Invent! Create! Put all your efforts into your art. Remember, this can't last forever, so above all else, ENJOY your journey, be it big or small.

—Josh Scogin
The Chariot

Devotions with Greg Tucker

"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
1 Samuel 16:7b

When Michael Jackson stepped onstage at Motown's 25th anniversary celebration, the dance world took notice. After months of intense private rehearsal he had perfected a slick move called the moonwalk, and when it was unveiled, even non-dancers were impressed. It was 1983 — 16 years before TiVo — so Americans were left staring at one another, asking, "What did we just see?" What became Jackson's signature move was an illusion. He seemed to walk one direction but was in fact traveling backwards.

Some Christians have mastered the art of spiritual moonwalking. It occurs when we aim ourselves at righteousness, but slowly backpedal to the life of sin we've left behind. The trick is virtually undetectable when done well, and unfortunately, most people do it well.

At a recent men's gathering I found a chair near Larry, a newcomer to the group. As always, the meeting began with each one summarizing his progress for the week, and most were intent on sounding impressive. As their pastor, I knew these men — I was aware of the struggles and failures — yet every testimony had the air of holy perfection: Things are great between God and me. Life is good.

Larry grew more discouraged with each report, and I felt him slump next to me. Finally when it was his turn, he half-lifted his head and with total honesty blurted, "You know fellas, my life is such a pile of (bleep) right now, I probably shouldn't even be here."

I could almost hear God say, "I can use a guy like Larry."

God can use a person like you, too. That is, if you're honest about how you're doing. He is surprisingly patient with flawed people who sincerely love Him, who are honest about where they are in light of where they need to be.

Some believers could earn an Oscar for their ability to look righteous — they make it to church every week, raise a hand during worship, keep a Bible in the car — but God sees when outward appearance is hiding backward motion. He also sees when a flawed but honest heart is willing to be made righteous by His strength.

[Greg Tucker lives in your computer at HopeCCA.com and is president of Tucker Signature Films in Beverly Hills. You can write him at TuckerG@mac.com]

PICK OF THE LITTER

☆ Life in Jersey

Mixing equal parts indie, alternative and straight-up rock, Life in Jersey is aggressive without being metal and honest without sounding emo. Their current full-length, *Plotted Points,* is rich with great hooks and dynamic melodies. Frontman Carson Land's vocal delivery is unique and endearing, altogether making *Plotted Points* a resonating listen. (Nathan Doyle)
myspace.com/lifeinjersey

☆ Dividing the Masses

Opening up with grunting and grinding guitars, Dividing the Masses delivers honesty amongst their ferocious screams and throaty belches. This five-piece outfit from Muscatine, Iowa brings a sweet listen and a carnal drum attack. (Bianca Montes)
myspace.com/dividingthemasses

Lybecker

Bringing that carefree Seattle vibe to their music, *Until We Feel Alive* awakens your spirit with catchy beats and joyful lyrics. While their sound may not blend in with a majority of bands that are covered by HM, they still managed to grab my attention. (BM)
myspace.com/lybeckermusic

Black Pajent

Balanced between eerie melodies and well-placed chugs, Black Pajent is a musical buffet that pulls from screamo, metal and the heavier side of radio rock, seared together and polished to shine. (ND)
myspace.com/blackpajentband

Good Luck Varsity

Fun, nice beats with an interesting atmosphere and use of electronics. Good Luck Varsity playfully harmonizes the vocals of guitarists Jen Wagner and Evan Baker while producing an airy spirit to the world. (BM)
goodluckvarsity.com/

☆ Holy Fiction

Wasting no time grabbing your attention, the raw vocals of Evan Lecker beautifully wrap around your ears. The serene sounds of this six-piece indie folk-rock band from Houston, TX, offer a rich layer into the electronic genre with their EP *Hours From It.* (BM)
myspace.com/holyfiction

Leah Le Grace

The sugary vocals of Leah Le Grace are sure to find favor in fans of chick-fronted pop/rock outfits such as Paramore and Fireflight. Guitar-powered ballads and a little bit of edge fill the 16 minutes of this five-song debut release. Girl Power! (BM)
myspace.com/leahlegrace

Mouth of the South

This band is one of the hardest-working bands in Dallas-Fort Worth, and it paid off at Cornerstone. They had some great shows all week, with great crowds and some prospects from a few labels. If you live in the DFW area, and have not seen this band, you need to come see why Mouth of the South may be the next big thing out of Texas. (Rob Shameless)
myspace.com/mouthofthesouthmetal

☆ Nine Lashes

Escape, Nine Lashes' 12-song offering roars from start to finish. Drawing their name from Isaiah 53, this band utilizes their dark sound to lyrically tell a story in every song. With every instrument dependent on the other, this group comes together perfectly. (BM)
myspace.com/ninelashes

And the Greatest of These

This band was the talk of the generator stages at Cornerstone, with not one, but two ladies killing it in the band, putting their male counterparts to shame – some of the best metal coming from the main road of Cornerstone. This band should be signing a record deal sometime soon; if no one good picks them up I'll be surprised. (RS)
myspace.com/andthegreatestofthese

Sons Had Father

What a great breath of fresh air this band is for fans of Explosions in the Sky and Shapes Stars Make. They are a great band for reading, prayer time or a starter to a great road trip, like the one you would take back from Cornerstone. They are also a great listen while writing articles. (RS)
myspace.com/sonshadfather

Strengthen What Remains

This Tampa, FL, hardcore band has been making a buzz on generator stages for a few years now. Making their mark with some great hardcore (and with vocalist Josh's This Is Generic! Clothing), this band is not to pass up. (RS)
myspace.com/strengthenwhatremainsfl

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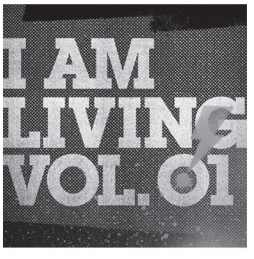

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Classic Moments in Christian Rock history

BY DOUG VAN PELT

REZ

Between Heaven 'N Hell

[1985 | Solid State]

The crown jewel in an awesome career.

Between Heaven 'N Hell probably should have been on the Top 100 Christian Rock Albums of All Time List. And there's a good argument for having their debut album, *Awaiting Your Reply*, on there, too.

Between Heaven 'N Hell found Rez in its peak form. They were veterans, road warriors and had settled into a blues-based classic rock sound that capitalized on their individual strengths as musicians and singers.

And the song "Shadows…" Oh my! Even if the band had not been pioneers and rock solid pastoral mentors to an entire scene, this one song would have alone given them status as Christian rock royalty. It embodies greatness and is a classic tune, no doubt about it. The crying opening riff moves along on top of a steady snare rim meter with lots and lots of feeling and embodies that "epic" feeling. This could be the centerpiece movie soundtrack moment when a main character shifts that gear mid-story and begins his or her journey back to a resolution. Like all great classic songs, it tells the gripping, sad story of a young man that found trouble, which eventually ate him up. It'll send a chill down your spine.

A band is lucky to have a song like that in its career. It'll bring people to a show just to hear that one great moment. Resurrection Band (aka Rez Band and Rez) was fortunate enough to have lots of really good songs in their repertoire. *Between Heaven 'N Hell* had another hit: "Love Comes Down," a fast-paced rocker that used silence (or negative space) to great effectiveness. "Talk To Me" had a mid-'80s pop rock beat that could've fit on a Phil Collins or Robert Plant solo album. It showcased Wendy Kaiser's voice with strength and authority. And "Zuid Afrikaan" was a powerful and poetic follow-up to "Afrikaans" from their second album, *Rainbow's End*.

Silence Screams, *Innocent Blood*, *Civil Rights* and perhaps *DMZ* were other strong albums from the band's catalog that all had their moments and should be a part of this discussion, too. 1982's *DMZ* featured Stu Heiss' guitar instrumental intro to "White Noise."

Awaiting Your Reply (if I can use some flawed "us vs. them" terminology), was like our Led Zeppelin *I* album. Released in 1978, it brought the thunder and rock-riff abandon of hard rock into Christian music in a way that Larry Norman, Randy Stonehill or Randy Matthews never came close to sonically displaying. They not only pushed the envelope, they ripped it open.

This is a good time to look back at the evaluation process that we used for our Top 100 Christian Rock Albums of All Time. Judging by historical impact alone, *Awaiting Your Reply* gets a top score. Somehow, in my editorial mind, the greatness, popularity and classic factors didn't rank as high. Certainly, Zeppelin *I* blows it (and the majority of all rock albums) out of the water in both the greatness and classic categories. Turns out *AYR* did reach #6 on the Christian music sales charts at the time, and apparently put the young Star Song label on the map in the fledgling Christian bookstore industry. When the final tabulations came in and albums were squeezed through the five equal categories (Love, Greatness, Popularity, Historical Impact and Classic-ness) Rez Band's two biggest nominees somehow fell short against the other 100 albums that made the "cut." Perhaps we should have allowed the Historical category to wield maybe a 21% weighting and lessened the Popularity factor to 19%. Maybe that would have given this deserving band their due.

Frank Sinatra put it best in his classic ode to selfishness: "Regrets? I've had a few…"

LIFEstyle

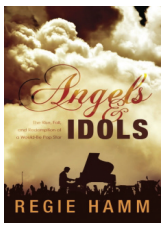
TO SAVE A LIFE
The elements of a Christian movie on DVD: Endorsement from church ministries? Check. Mostly unproven acting talent? Check. Legitimate hip-hop in soundtrack? Beer pong? School shooting? The word "damnit?" Implied teenage sex? A youth pastor that's a cool ... hero? Yes, this movie breaks the norm while still tugging deeply at your heart. Loving and accepting the outcast is championed in this flick and I love it for that. And the deleted scenes reveal that the pastor's kid is even more evil than one first thought. [Sony Pictures] *Doug Van Pelt*
[Cuss: 2 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

GUITAR PRO 6
The Guitar Pro series of music composing software has rendered writing on sheet music obsolete. The newest edition allows users to write music for a wide variety of instruments in both standard notation and tablature. In addition, the program allows you to synthesize your arrangements through a vast bank of MIDI tones. Guitar Pro's incredibly fluid interface and wide range of options make it a valuable tool. [guitar-pro.com] *Jeff Sistrunk*
[Setup Ease: A | Performance: A | Price: $49]

WHO KILLED NANCY?
After 30 years and a closed murder case, writer Alan Parker revisits the October 12th death of Nancy Spungen in the bathroom of room 100 at the famous Chelsea Hotel, and the events that led up to the drug overdose of boyfriend/Sex Pistols bassist Sid Vicious. Walking the viewer through a re-examination of the not-so-airtight NYPD report, Parker performs one of the most detailed accounts of this controversial rock legend's case, and leaves us wondering, did Sid really kill Nancy? [Peace Arch Entertainment] *Bianca Montes*
[Cuss: 15 | Gore: 15 | Sex: 2 | Spiritual Conversations: 20]

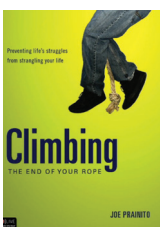
BODYGUARDZ
Let's face it, the iPhone is a sexy-looking device. So, the promise of this device is big (a thin clear case that protects from drop and scratches), but the delivery falls agonizingly short. I have applied a few iPhone and iPod skins in my time, so I thought I'd perfected the craft; but getting this thin plastic film to lay down around the corners and curves of the back of the iPhone is darn near impossible. Shine this. I'll stick with the best I've found – the thinline Griffin Threadless sleeve. [bodyguardz.com] *DV*
[Setup Ease: D- | Performance: C- | Price: $24]

CHRISTIANISH | MARK STEELE
There's a serious attitude problem in today's mainstream Christian church, and Mark Steele is determined to fix it. Steele issues an indictment to "Christian-ish" folks who claim to follow Christ while simultaneously harboring materialistic and judgmental tendencies. It's a hilarious and convicting read that's sure to provoke debate. [David C. Cook] *JS*

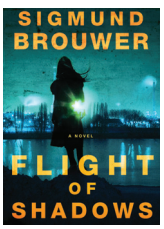


ANGELS & IDOLS | REGIE HAMM
Presenting the reader with an eye-opening glance into the rise and fall of a chart-topping career in the Christian music industry, singer/songwriter Reggie Hamm details some of the darkest days of his life in *Angels & Idols*. Forgoing a message of unwavering faith, this self-indulgent autobiography chases missed opportunities and broken dreams detailing selfishness at its finest. [Tate Publishing] *BM*

CLIMBING THE END OF YOUR ROPE | JOE PRAINITO
Desperation will get one to pick up a book with a subtitle like: "Preventing life's struggles from strangling your life," but reading unexpected stories about an awkward relationship that turns suicidal and another about an artist that gave up his dreams after a car accident and another about a bitter man that separates himself from his family and all others. While some of the application emphases come off a bit too try-hard and obtuse, the stories carry the book along and drive home the points. The topics include six things worth escaping: weight, the past, guilt, discouragement, bitterness and fear. Helpful advice from an experienced traveler. Towards the end of the book it's fun to discover that the author was once the bassist for Wicked's End and Redline, both of which got their fair share of editorial coverage in this magazine. [Tate Publishing] *DV*



FLIGHT OF SHADOWS | SIGMUND BROUWER
I admit I had previously enjoyed some of his medical dramas. This is quite a departure from those. There is a medical element, but it is much more sci-fi/fantasy. If you enjoy this genre, then I think you will enjoy this book. It kept me reading and involved wanting to know more. I would have liked a bit more background on how the world got to its current state, but the description of the current city-states and people leaving in soovies (SUVs in a junkyard) created a picture in my mind. As a believer, the themes of freedom, forgiveness and redemption touched my faith, but the themes would not be off-putting for a non-believing friend. If you enjoy a good fantasy, check it out. [WaterBrook Press] *Charlotta Van Pelt*



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